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THE

NUN OF MISERECORDIA.

A ROMANCE.

Lane, Darling, and Co. Leadenhall-Street.

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THE

NUN OF MISERECORDIA;

OR,

THE EVE OF ALL SAINTS.

A Romance.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY SOPHIA FRANCES,

AUTHOR OF VIVONIO, CONSTANCE DE LINDENSDORF, &c.

Nor sleep, nor sanctuary,
* * * * * * * * * * *
The prayers of priests, nor times of sacrifice,
————shall lift up
Their privilege and custom 'gainst my hate.
SHAKESPEARE.

VOL. III.

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THE

NUN OF MISERECORDIA.

CHAP. I.

CHEERED by the prospect of soon seeing some of the beloved friends of her youth, Adelaide quitted her pillow at an early hour, and prepared for her expected excursion to the convent of Santa Catherina; but soon her pleasing hope was disappointed by the arrival of a courier, who announced the speedy approach of the Marquis of St. Viviers, who, he said, had narrowly escaped with life, from the attack of

some banditti, who had also badly wounded one of the servants.

All was now bustle and confusion in preparing for the unexpected arrival of the Marquis, and Madame de Beauvais could not think of quitting the chateau at such a time.

With spirits more than ever depressed, Adelaide returned to her own apartment. She sat down to write to the Lady Abbess of Santa Catherina, informing her of her near vicinity, and of her intention soon to fix her residence for life in the convent, where so many happy hours of her youth had been passed. This letter she gave to Nannette, to be dispatched by a servant to the convent, and the young woman soon returned to inform her that it had been sent off.

Nannette, however, stammered, and looked so confused, while assuring her lady that her commands had been executed, that Adelaide could not avoid being particularly struck with her manner, and instantly conceived

ceived an idea that the girl was deceiving her. Shocked at this suspicion, she fixed her eyes on Nannette with a look of earnest grief and penetration, and mentioned her surmise; warning the girl at the same time, as she valued her peace both here and hereafter, not to become an agent in any deception, which would most certainly in the end bring about her own inevitable ruin.

Nannette coloured, turned pale, trembled, and at last burst into tears, and fell at her feet.

The youthful artless Adelaide saw in this conduct evident marks of penitent guilt. She spoke in a voice of soothing pity and encouragement to the young woman; who, sobbing convulsively, exclaimed — "I do not deserve your goodness, Mam'selle.— I am a wicked wretched creature, and have sworn the most dreadful oath to be secret and faithful to my employers."

"Such oaths are, I believe, not binding, Nannette," said Adelaide, after a short pause

of surprise and fear—"But as you regard the favour of Heaven, immediately consult some pious confessor, who is better able to inform you of their extent than I am."

Nannette hid her face, and again wept violently. At length she raised her tear-swollen eyes with a look of unfeigned sorrow to Adelaide, who gazed on her in silent amazement and concern, and said—"I did, Mam'selle—I did once say before Father Baptista the confessor, who sometimes comes to the chateau, that I believed oaths taken to do wicked things were not binding, and he said, 'certainly not; but that it was a very great and deadly crime to take them at all; and that all the amends we could make would be to forsake them, and do penance for our wicked folly.'—And this has sometimes cheered my heart, and sometimes vexed me to death; for if I keep them, what will become of my soul? and if I break them, I shall be ruined and turned out upon the world.—Oh, Mam'selle, if you would be so gracious as to promise

promise that I should not be left to want, and forced to go on in my bad ways, I will tell you all."

"I will provide for you, most assuredly, Nannette," replied Adelaide, in faltering accents, "provided you are inclined to good."

"I am, I am, *indeed* I am, dear, good young lady," cried the poor deluded creature, bursting into a flood of grateful tears —"You have saved me from destruction, Mam'selle," she continued, as soon as her grief permitted her the power of speaking —"Ah! I was so innocent and happy, and gay as a lark, when I first went with you, Mam'selle, to that frightful abomination place, the Castle of St. Viviers. Do you remember, Mam'selle, how I was turned away, because the Marquis pretended not to like the sight of young women in the castle? It was all a story,-and he is the worst and deceitfullest man in all the world; for instead of being sent home to my poor honest parent at Rochfort, I was carried to a fine

chateau belonging to one Chevalier Bionville, a wickeder man even than the Marquis, and there I was coaxed, and flattered, and dressed — and — oh, Mam'selle! my brain was turned with vanity—I thought myself a fine lady in a minute; and—and I—I was quite undone." Here Nannette again wept bitterly, and Adelaide recoiled in affright and sorrow.

When the unhappy girl had recovered her speech, she continued—" For some weeks, Mam'selle, nothing was too good for me, and I verily believe I was crazed with pride; when all at once the Marquis seemed to take no more notice of me—— so don't hate the sight of me, my dear young lady; but I was afraid of losing all my grandeur and finery, and so—and so—I—I listened to the soft speeches of the old Chevalier Bionville, and became ten times worse than ever.—And then I lived such a wicked life of gaiety!—But at last the Chevalier came home one evening in a most terrible passion, and told me that he had

had discovered that his ward, the Chevalier de Valmont, was going to ruin himself, by running away with, and marrying the young English lady, Mademoiselle Vernor, who the Marquis had been obliged to send away from the castle, for putting a thousand wicked vagaries into your head, Mademoiselle; and so——"

"My poor Henrietta!" sighed the horror-stricken trembling Adelaide, anxious, yet dreading to hear the continuation of Nannette's tale — "What may have been thy fate!"

"Fate, Mademoiselle!" stammered the guilty Nannette—"why, have you never heard any thing of the young lady since then, Mademoiselle?" and now the pale confounded looks of the girl added a thousand new fears to those which already tortured the soul of Adelaide, who had scarcely power to reply.

"Alas! I have not. — Unfortunate misguided girl, inform me now what is become of my beloved friend?"

Nannette for a moment stood quite aghast; and then, bursting into tears, fell at the feet of the young lady, and sobbing violently, exclaimed — "I will tell you, Mademoiselle, I will indeed, if you will promise to forgive me for my wicked, cruel doings— Oh! if I had but guessed what would have become of my folly, I'm sure the Chevalier should never have——"

"For mercy's sake, delay not to tell me all," again cried Adelaide; and Nannette, not daring to disobey, continued—"Why, Mademoiselle, after the false, deceitful Chevalier had told me about his ward's going to run off with Mademoiselle Vernor, he swore that he must prevent it, and so he would bring the—the young heretic to the chateau, and punish her well for daring to think of having the Chevalier Valmont. And so, what does he do but employs a wicked, spying valet-de-chambre, whom he had placed about the young Chevalier, even from his infancy, to take Mademoiselle from a convent in Grenoble, and bring her

her to the chateau; and so, Mademoiselle, the wicked valet pretended to be very fond of his master, the young Chevalier, and promised him that he would help him to take Mademoiselle to England, as the Chevalier was expecting to be obliged to join his regiment in a hurry; and so the valet got her away, sure enough—and as sure she was brought to the chateau, while M. de Valmont thought she was on her way to England, and set off to join his regiment."

Again Adelaide had nearly sunk back lifeless, but the cry of terror uttered by Nannette recalled her fleeting senses.

"There, there!" shrieked the miserable girl, "I knew—I knew that you never would forgive me — Oh! what a sad, sad wretch I am!"

Adelaide put her hand before her eyes, and motioned to the girl to proceed.

"I will—I will, Madèmoiselle, for if you never could bear the sight of me again, 'tis no more than what I well deserve for my wicked folly.—Poor Mademoiselle Vernor

was in strong fits when she was brought into the chateau—and she kept on crying and bewailing all that night; and would shriek so if the Chevalier Bionville came near her, that 'twas terrible to hear her; and threatened such vengeance from her country and her friends—and I, poor silly-headed fool, never once suspected that the Chevalier Bionville was in love with her all the while.—Holy Mary help me! that I, that was brought up so virtuously, should ever belong to such a set—Ah, Mademoiselle! I heard enough when I was at home about being so vain and proud of myself, and of my beauty; but I little thought that my conceit would bring me to ruin!—But as I was telling you, Mademoiselle," she sobbingly continued, "when Mademoiselle Vernor was brought to the chateau, I was set to be her companion; and as the vile Chevalier said that there was no way of pulling down her arrogant spirit, but by maki[illegible] her as free-hearted as myself—aye, those were his words, a wicked man, that I must

must even try and persuade, or frighten her into accepting him as a lover. And so —so, as I could not bear her scorn of me, and my finery, I used to tell her she would be forced to consent at last. But the good young lady used to spurn me away, and always treated me with such anger and contempt, that I—I hated her for it downright, and did all I could to vex and terrify her. But it was all pride, Mademoiselle, for when I was by myself, and used to think of my poor grandmother's warnings, I would hide myself in a corner and cry bitterly, because I was not like the virtuous lady that I was behaving so ill to.—But I was now got so afraid of the Chevalier Bionville, because he used to tell me how he might, if he liked, shut me up in a prison convent all my life, that I was afraid to let Mademoiselle Vernor see how sorry I was. And at last the Chevalier took the young lady away from the chateau one night, and I never heard any thing more about her."

Adelaide, whose troubled feelings had

been agitated by the most fearfully anxious expectation, now felt all the tortures of incertitude and dread; and, almost doubting the sincerity of the penitent Nannette, made a thousand enquiries respecting the Chevalier's usual haunts; but Nannette was really ignorant of all his proceedings, and could give no further information respecting him or Henrietta. Despairing, therefore, of hearing any thing more of her beloved friend's perilous situation, yet resolving to exert every possible effort to discover her present state, Adelaide now, with shuddering fear, asked whether Nannette had ever heard the Count St. Croix mentioned in the chateau de Bionville?

"O yes, Mademoiselle," replied the still weeping girl, "I once heard the Chevalier Bionville say that the Count was murdered in a wood, as he was on his journey to join his regiment, and that was all I ever heard of him; I was very sorry indeed, for you, Mademoiselle, was always so kind and mild to me while I was with you, that I was very

sorry indeed when I heard that your dear lover was dead.—But pray—pray, Mademoiselle, now don't grieve so.—The Count was so good a Christian, that I'm sure he is happy; and there's no cause to cry for the death of good people—but, oh! 'tis a sad thing when a wicked one dies—for who can think of their state without crying!—Oh! Mademoiselle, I tremble every limb when I think of myself, I have been so very —very wicked; for do you know, dear young lady, as soon as the Chevalier had left the chateau with Mademoiselle Vernor, the Marquis St. Vivier came there, and pretended to be as much in love with me as ever; and I—I, silly fool, believed him, and——but when the Marchioness died, he seemed quite delighted, and offered to marry me if I would assist him in a little plot against you, Mademoiselle, for he said you had got some estates of his in your power; and which you had no just right to, and he wanted to make you give them up: and so he flattered and coaxed me into consenting.

consenting. Then I was told by him, that I must dress myself like a servant, and pretend to be very simple and country-like in my manners; and that he would soon appoint a person to come and take me into Gascony, and that I should then be hired to attend upon you; and that you would not come to this chateau, as he meant to take you to a more retired place, only he must give out that you was coming here, and had run away from him, that nobody might suspect what was going on.—I didn't like the thoughts of acting the servant, although he told me that when we had got to the secret place, where he meant to keep you, till you had signed over your fortune to him, I should then dress like his intended bride, and order you as I liked. Well, Mam'selle, at last I consented, and I was brought here; but instead of my being taken to the secret house to meet you, I was surprised by seeing you come here in safety, as I knew you was to have been carried off on the road."

The

The mystery of the inn was now fully clear to the horror-stricken mind of Adelaide, who, with shuddering terror, enquired whether Madame de Beauvais had been privy to the vile plan?

"Yes, Mam'selle," replied the still weeping Nannette, "she is no better than me, only she's a great lady—why, she is *worse*, Mam'selle, for what do you think I overheard her telling dame Catherine this morning?—nothing less than that the Marquis, your uncle, was distractedly in love with, and would have you, if he even lost his life to gain you.—A vile wicked wretch!" added she, passionately.

Adelaide groaned, and sunk back in her chair. Never before had her pure and innocent mind been shocked with such a tale of depravity. The guilty Nannette sprinkled her pale cheeks with water, and wrung her hands in an agony of remorse and sorrow. Slowly recovering, Adelaide made an effort to enquire after Henrietta, of whose fate Nannette vowed perfect ignorance; and the

the lovely afflicted girl now made the miserable victim of vanity repeat the words she had heard Madame de Beauvais say to Catherine.

When Nannette perceived that Adelaide could in any degree attend to her, she earnestly entreated that some asylum might be instantly pointed out to her, lest the Marquis might again attempt to seduce her, or sacrifice her to his revenge.

Adelaide, who instantly saw the propriety of this precaution, asked the unfortunate being if she could escape to the convent of Santa Catherina, where on *her* importunity she might be received? Nannette said she was sure she could, but said that it would be impossible for Adelaide to escape, as every footstep of *hers* would be strictly watched.

"But I can inform your friends, Mam'-selle, and then they can deliver you."

Adelaide, who doubted not the immediate interference which would take place when the Abbess was made acquainted with her

her situation, acquiesced, and, with a trembling hand, wrote a few lines to the good superior, requesting her to admit and secrete the penitent Nannette, who would inform her of her perilous situation, from which she prayed immediate deliverance.

It was now agreed that Nannette should not make her intended escape till night, lest she should be discovered and disappointed; while the fear that the girl's swollen eyes and dejected looks would infallibly betray her, made Adelaide resolve on not quitting her room during the remainder of the day, that she might have an excuse for detaining her attendant in her apartment. Under plea of indisposition, she therefore dined in her dressing-room, eagerly availing herself of an opportunity of secluding herself from the society of Madame de Beauvais, the developement of whose real principles and character now filled the mind of Adelaide with sentiments of mingled dread and abhorrence.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

ABOUT mid-day the Marquis arrived in a post-chaise, and was immediately conveyed to his chamber, his wounds being so dangerous and painful that he was unable to sit up.

Adelaide, who now but too justly conjectured that it had been the Marquis who had so much alarmed her in the solitary inn, doubted not but that his hurts proceeded from the attack made on him by her faithful Cæsar; especially as Jaques had told her that his lord had been accustomed to treat the dog with the most inhuman severity, whenever he accidentally found

found it in the castle. That the Marquis must have so mysteriously visited her chamber in the inn, only with an intention of conveying her privately to the lone dilapidated house in the Cevennes, she found no difficulty in believing, as this circumstance so exactly answered to the relation of his intentions on that point, given her by the penitent Nannette, whom she now questioned farther on the subject, and had all her conjectures confirmed into certainty, by learning he had spoken of his resolves not to entrust any servant with the execution of the plan.

As soon as the shades of evening veiled the surrounding country, Nannette, after again kneeling at the feet of her young lady for forgiveness, succeeded in escaping unseen from the chateau. Adelaide, however, passed a night of restless anxiety on her account; but it was late in the next day before the fugitive was missed, and then only by Madame de Beauvais not seeing her as usual in the chamber of Adelaide

was

was her flight suspected and discovered. The evident consternation of Madame de Beauvais, on being convinced that Nannette had really fled, and the rage she could not entirely repress, but too well proved to Adelaide that she was herself the worthless being she had been represented by the penitent, who was now unsuccessfully pursued.

The hurry of spirits and grief for the fate of her Henrietta, which had confused and tortured the mind of Adelaide during the night, had now, when assured that Nannette had escaped undiscovered, and was likely to reveal her situation to her friends, in some degree subsided, and she was able to reflect on the singular and dreadful dilemma in which both herself and Henrietta were involved, and to resolve on instantly placing herself, if possible, under the protection of the virtuous Abbess of Santa Catherina, whose influence, as she was a woman of noble birth and great interest, would doubtless be exerted in obtaining justice

justice for herself and her much injured friend, whose deplorable situation still filled her bosom with the utmost alarm and sorrow.

Assuming as much apparent indifference as possible, she received the visits of Madame de Beauvais, but could not be prevailed upon to leave her rooms, till the recollection that should she continue to seclude herself, she should thereby prevent all possibility of hearing aught from her friend, the Abbess, who would certainly, when informed of her situation, devise some plan of writing to her, determined Adelaide to descend to the saloon of Madame, who had too much penetration not to perceive that her young guest had imbibed for her sentiments of the most unfavourable nature.

Madame, however, took care not to notice this change. Fanchon was now appointed the new attendant of Mademoiselle St. Viviers, and the most odious character of the runaway circulated throughout the chateau;

chateau; till at length the easy unconcern and seemingly unsuspecting manner of Madame Beauvais had nearly lulled some of Adelaide's fears.

Day after day for nearly a fortnight passed on, and the Marquis did not recover; nor was there any message or letter from the convent of Santa Catherina. Adelaide dared not as yet mention a wish of visiting the convent, or of writing to the Abbess, lest effectual care should be taken to prevent her carrying on any intercourse with her friends for ever.

Pining in concealed anguish of heart, she wandered out into the groves and gardens of the chateau, but her steps were always accompanied by Madame, or Fanchon; till at length perceiving that she had no intention of running away, she was sometimes permitted to walk alone in the gardens.

One evening, just as the last ray of the setting sun trembled on the foaming billows of the distant Bay of Biscay, as she stood

stood on a high-raised marble terrace, watching the swift declining beam of day, a venerable looking monk, descending the entangled path-way that led into a neglected shrubbery, which the terrace overlooked, attracted her attention, and on seeing her, he redoubled his feeble speed, and made a motion to her to wait his approach. With trembling eagerness she watched his advance. He stopped beneath the terrace, and fastening a letter on the end of a small stick, reached it up to her, and, in a low voice, begged her to bring an answer to that spot, on the same hour the next day; telling her at the same time, that if he should not be there, she might drop her packet into the shrubbery walk, and, as it was never frequented by any person but himself, he should be sure to find it.

The monk then disappeared, and Adelaide hastened to her own room to examine the note.

The bright beams of the rising moon shone

shone full into her window, and adding to the clearness of the evening, gave her sufficient light to trace the characters in the letter, which she instantly perceived came from the amiable Abbess of Santa Catherina.

With an emotion of joy which cannot be felt by any who have not been in somewhat of the same situation, Adelaide eagerly read the letter. It was as follows:

" DEAR AMIABLE CHILD,

" I have received and endeavoured to comfort the unhappy penitent you so pathetically recommended to my compassion. She has told me a horrible tale.—Can Adelaide be so cruelly situated?—I cry a thousand times in the course of a day—and can I not assist her?—I have already written to my friend, the Bishop of Bayonne.

" Your affairs will be immediately investigated; but in the mean time can you not fly to me? Father Baptista, who will, if possible,

possible, deliver you this, may assist you to escape. — Come to me, my dear, valuable child. I will not alarm you by accounts which might distress you, but I will comfort you with the assurance that at least you will be safe, while you are under the roof of Madame de Beauvais. She is, I will allow, depraved and wicked enough to further *any* shame of villainy: but a specious reputation is of infinite value in her eyes; therefore you may be certain, that while you are with her, no *immediate* danger can be apprehended. But alas! how soon may you not be spirited away!—Be courageous, my dear child, and exert yourself to fly to the arms and protection of your friends at Santa Catherina's.

"ANGELINA,

"Abbess of Santa Catherina."

This epistle filled the mind of Adelaide with alternate emotions of satisfaction and anxious fear. She was for a moment con-

soled by the Abbess's assurances, that while she remained with Madame de Beauvais, she should, in some degree, be free from danger; but the sad conviction of the impossibility of escaping, and the dread that the Marquis would on his recovery hurry her away from the chateau de Ferroillet, before her friends could make any exertions to save her, revived all her trouble, and plunged her into despondency. From this state of woe, however, she was quickly awakened, by the recollection of how impious were her doubts in the protecting care of Heaven; and fervently raising her hopes to the Most High, she entreated pardon for her weak indulgence of despair, and began to consider in what manner she should attempt to leave the chateau, or again write to the friendly Abbess.

The gardens were so public to all the inhabitants of the chateau, that there did not appear the least probability of her being able to leave them unobserved; and as to quitting the house by either the public or private

private entrances, she knew that would be utterly impossible amid a crowd of servants. She was conscious that she even run a considerable risk, in venturing to throw whatever letter she might write from the terrace. The attempt, however, must be made; and therefore she sat up half the night, writing a brief account of all that had befallen her since her father's death, purposing to send it to the Abbess, that that lady might be better enabled, by the knowledge of every circumstance which had occurred, to afford her relief. Nor did Adelaide omit to urge her friend to use the most speedy methods for delivering her beloved Henrietta from the power of the vile Bionville.

The presentiment which had but truly assured Adelaide that she never should find an opportunity of escaping from the chateau was soon fully verified, for she was now more closely watched than ever; and three days elapsed ere she could find a moment to drop her packet over the wall of the

terrace, which however she at length succeeded in doing unobserved, although Madame de Beauvais was walking by her side. The having been able to effect this, gave her a sensation of sincere thankfulness to Heaven, when, on returning with Madame to the saloon, she beheld the Marquis reclined on a sofa, with his right arm confined in a sling, and his face as pale as death.

She started, and lingered near the door. He attempted to rise — a faint colour flushed his cheek, and he pronounced her name in a low and faltering voice, and then entreated her to stay.

The extreme agitation which the unexpected sight of the Marquis occasioned her, threw a confusion and hesitation into the manner of Adelaide, and she did not reply, but in silent embarrassment was retreating, when Madame de Beauvais, gaily taking her hand, led her into the room, and then saying she would leave her to congratulate her uncle on his recovery, went out and shut the door.

"What

"What am I to imagine from this singular behaviour, my dear Adelaide?" said the Marquis, approaching her, and attempting to take her hand, which she hastily drew back, and again made an effort to leave the room, which the Marquis prevented by taking her hand, which she now vainly endeavoured to withdraw, while he passionately said—"Is it possible that the situation in which you see me cannot move you to compassion?—Wounded and suffering as I am, I at least expected that you would express some degree of feeling for my state."—He then let go her struggling hand, and sunk upon the sofa, as if overcome by his emotion.

Adelaide, who had now recovered from her confusion, again retreated towards the door, while casting on him a most expressive look, she said—"Were I ignorant, my Lord, *how* and *where*, and when your wounds were inflicted, I might feel otherwise than I do at present."

The imprudence of this speech was in-

stantly manifested to the trembling girl, for the Marquis instantly started wildly from the couch, flew and seized her hand, and leading her rapidly back, exclaimed—

"Then you knew me! — All further concealment is useless. — Hear me then avow that I adore you, Adelaide!—that I am *not* your *uncle,* and that with my existence only will I ever resign you."

"Oh, horrible! horrible falsehood!" shrieked Adelaide, and had almost fainted.

The Marquis, whose illness was by no means so violent as he had thought proper to affect, bore her to the couch, and sprinkled her pale cheek with water. She soon re-opened her eyes, but instantly averted them in horror from the Marquis, whose soothing voice struck her soul with dread.

"Leave me," she cried; "begone from my sight, or I shall die!"

"I cannot, will not leave you thus, capricious girl," replied the Marquis, sternly regarding her, as with shivering terror she shrunk

shrunk from him — "I have already sufficiently humiliated myself, by having recourse to the mean deceptive guise which has hitherto concealed my sentiments from you. In a few days you shall be made acquainted with all that it is necessary for you to know. But remember I repeat, I am *not* your *uncle*; yet I possess unlimited power over you, and you had best reflect that you can secure my everlasting gratitude, or urge me to revenge."——At this instant Madame de Beauvais entered the room. She affected a surprise which she did not feel at the situation of Adelaide, and tenderly enquired what had occurred?

"Mademoiselle Adelaide," said the Marquis, "will inform you, Madame, in her own apartment; and I trust that the representations made by your friendship will induce her to act rationally."

Adelaide silently arose, and was led by Madame de Beauvais to her chamber, where, sinking on a chair, a violent burst of tears relieved her tortured heart. Madame at-

tempted to soothe her agitation, but was heard with impatience, and turned from with unfeigned disgust and abhorrence.

The lady was offended, and soon left the miserable sufferer to the solitary and dreadful reflections which crowded upon her brain.

The assertion of the Marquis, that he was not her uncle, appeared so evidently a mere subterfuge to veil the acknowledgment of the passion he had conceived for her, that Adelaide hesitated not a moment in concluding it to be a vile fabricated falsehood, which she imagined he could neve prove, till on farther reflection the idea occurred, that it was possible that the Marquis might intend to bring forward some fictitious testimonies to invalidate the legitimacy of her birth, and thus secure to himself the property left by her father; and when he had made her thus defenceless and destitute, exert his usurped power to the utmost; she trembled with increasing horror as this alarming surmise gathered force,

force, and in the keenest agony deplored the apparent impracticability of flight. But it would be impossible to follow her through the varied and distracting conjectures and unavailing plans which occupied and tormented her mind for some hours, till the return of Madame de Beauvais, who had acquired a fresh stock of patience and dissimulation, to enable her to argue with and endure the resentment of her young guest.

The violence of Adelaide's feelings was considerably abated, and if she could not entirely repress the contempt and indignation she felt for Madame, she yet listened in silence to a long harangue, intended to prove that the Marquis was one of the most amiable of men; and that as his late pretended near relationship could now be no obstacle, and as she was entirely free from engagements, she might at least hear with patience his just and honourable proposals, which, if not approved of, should certainly be rejected with mildness.

"By what name or title am I to mention this gentleman, Madame?" suddenly asked Adelaide.

"The Marquis St. Viviers, undoubtedly," replied Madame earnestly.

"And *my* name?" she again demanded.

"That you will hear very soon," said Madame; "I am not at liberty to inform you."

"Then I have no right to that of St. Viviers?"

"No, Mademoiselle."

All Adelaide's surmises were now apparently confirmed, and she raised her streaming eyes to Heaven for pity.

Madame de Beauvais seemed affected, and, in a faltering voice, she said—"I am sincerely grieved to see you thus afflicted; but alas! it is not in my power to prevent the wishes of the Marquis, my friend. Yet suffer me to endeavour to alleviate your distress, by representing to you the best means of avoiding the *denouement* you dread.

dread.—The Marquis is of an inflexible temper when he meets with opposition; but it is not impossible to alter his resolves by reasoning and mildness. Let me therefore advise you to see him, and when you have with calmness listened to his propositions, object to them with gentleness, and point out to him the little probability of his ever being happy in the obtaining your hand without your affections. Remind him of his promise respecting your taking the veil, and mildly assure him that such a plan is the only one which can now afford you tranquillity.—You sigh—you weep, Mademoiselle; you seclude yourself, to avoid a man who possesses a right of guardianship to command your present obedience — Ah! let me intreat, that you will at least assume a composure which possibly you cannot feel, else you will assuredly be instantly removed from the chateau; and whatever may have been my errors, believe me, you can have no just

cause to fear aught while under my roof. By seeing the Marquis, and listening to him here, no hazard is run; by avoiding him, you will compel him to place you where every hope of combating his power must be vain."

Thus argued Madame de Beauvais; and although the softness of her manner and the plausibility of her words were too apparently affected not to strike Adelaide, still she felt, that could she overcome the reluctance and horror she experienced at the idea of seeing and conversing with the Marquis, such a line of conduct as she had proposed would undoubtedly be most prudent to pursue, as she might from his discourse be enabled to form a right opinion of the extent of his power and designs, and thus procure the means of avoiding the one, and defeating the other: besides, the dread of being suddenly removed out of the knowledge of her friends at Santa Catherina, strongly influenced her

to attempt following the advice of Madame; and at length she faintly murmured her assent to see the Marquis.

Madame commended this prudent resolve; and after a few exhortations to courage and caution, quitted her.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

IN the evening she attended Madame de Beauvais to the saloon, where a small party was assembled. The Marquis was present, but he did not pay her any particular attention, and nothing occurred during the evening to increase the uneasiness of her mind. After supper the company renewed their card-playing, and Adelaide withdrew. As she crossed the vestibule, she perceived one of the domestics speaking with a monk, on whose pale features shone the light from the chandelier suspended from the lofty dome, and discovered to her view the Father Baptista.

She

She looked earnestly and surprised at him, and her glance was returned by the Father with a most significant look, and, as she passed him, he bowed lowly, and presented her a paper, which in an humble tone, he said was a petition for aid towards erecting a little chapel for the reception of a precious relic which had been lately found by one of his brethren, the Franciscans of the convent of St. Bernard. With a beating heart, Adelaide took the petition, and presented the Father her purse. She then hurried to her room, whither she was attended by Fanchon, who enquired, with an air of anxiety, whether Mademoiselle would read the petition before she retired? Adelaide said "Yes;" and Fanchon humbly entreated permission to return to the servants' hall, as there was a person there, she added, whom she had not seen for some years, and she wished to bid him good night before he quitted the chateau.

With as much affected indifference as she could assume, and with real pleasure, Adelaide

laide desired her to go; and away flew Fanchon to coquet a little longer with her old lover, leaving her young lady at perfect liberty to look over the papers the monk had presented to her.

The envelope of a small packet she found was really a petition, which she laid on the dressing-table, and after fastening her chamber door, and looking that Cæsar was safe in the anti-room, she sat down to examine the packet. It consisted of several sheets of paper closely written, and was signed Sister Franeisca, of the convent of Santa Catherina.

This nun, who was a truly good and venerable woman, had always evinced the greatest regard for Adelaide, whose surprise at finding such a packet addressed to her by her ancient friend, was lessened by reading a few introductory lines, which were as follows:—

"The

"The situation of my dear adopted child (for so she had ever been accustomed to term Adelaide) has so much afflicted me, that I can hardly attain composure sufficient to enable me to write these few lines; yet as I could not send you the enclosed little history without informing you wherefore I do so, I am even obliged to exert my trembling hand to give you the requisite explanation.—You are under the roof of Madame de Beauvais. Alas!—Beware, my child! But why should I warn Adelaide to beware the contagion of vice? I am confident you need not this caution.—But it is essential that you should know the true character of the woman you are so unfortunately with. The narrative I send will best explain it—it will also put you on your guard:—Cheer your spirits with the certainty that your friends are not idle. The Marquis will soon be called to a severe account.—All that we fear is your being spirited away ere our plans are ripe for accomplishment.—Your uncle's power

is

is undoubtedly great, but we have already some cause to hope we shall be able to defeat him.—Neither time nor infirmity will allow me to enter into particulars.—If you can send us an answer, my beloved Adelaide, omit not to inform us whether you have ever heard your father mention a gentleman of the name of M. Le Luc, who was his agent at Bayonne some years since. Adieu; may Heaven have you in its holy keeping, prays

"FRANCESCA."

The eagerness of Adelaide to read the little manuscript would hardly permit her to make any reflections on the letter of Sister Francesca; but she experienced in no small degree the pleasing satisfaction of being certain, from the enquriry respecting M. Le Luc, that her friends were busily employed in her behalf.

Her door being fastened prevented her fearing

fearing any intrusion from Fanchon without timely notice; and with most anxious earnestness she began the perusal of the small manuscript of Francesca, which commenced as follows:—

"M. de Dumont, the father of Madame de Beauvais, was descended from a noble French family, which had fallen into poverty and decay; and this last remaining branch of a once splendid house was compelled to engage in mercantile concerns. He settled at Oporto, and married the rich heiress of a Portuguese merchant, whose riches were her principal attraction. Madame de Dumont, however, had many amiable qualities, but alas! if *I* may dare to say so, they were obscured by a versatility of disposition, and much pride. M. de Dumont and his lady however lived happily together, and their union was crowned by the birth of four daughters and one son, all of

of whom, in compliment to the prejudices of their mother, were baptized by Portugueze namēs. Josepha de Dumont, afterwards Madame de Ferroillet, was the eldest; and surely if ever human being approached to angelic perfection and beauty, this most amiable young woman did.

"The second was called Leonora, and if she possessed not either the beauty nor the inestimable qualities of her sister, she yet was blessed, thank Heaven, with a temper formed to endure affliction, and a heart most tenderly attached to her beloved Josepha, whose example was her constant study, and whose love was the constant source of her delight.—Dear, lamented Josepha! how often, cheered by thy fortitude, has thy Leonora endured, like thyself, the torment of the many and bitter mortifications from another sister, several years younger than either, who, most unfortunately for herself, was the idol of her parents, whose inconsiderate indulgence and capricious displeasure, alternately exercised towards

towards their young favourite, drew forth and cherished, even in her infant heart, the worst and most lamentable propensities. Flattered and caressed beyond all bounds one day, the next repulsed with angry hateur, Elvira's——."

Adelaide started at this name—it recalled to her mind the dreadful nun of Miserecordia, for she had heard her father call *her* Elvira. She paused in breathless reflection, till the consideration of the folly of suffering a mere similarity of name to affect her, occurred.—She then became more composed, and continued—

"Elvira's caprice became as unlimited as that with which she was treated, and she so well imitated this unhappy line of conduct, that she rendered every one near her as miserable as herself, except her youngest sister Theresa, who was her junior but one year. In their dispositions there was a striking similarity, except in one respect: Elvira was passionate to an excess, and this defect almost constantly defeated all the little

little artful schemes which she planned. Theresa was cold, sly, and placid, and of the most persevering temper. Although ever the first to plan any little vexation which could afflict her elder sisters, she always made Elvira commence and execute them, while she shielded herself behind the excuse of not having taken any part in them.

"Rising through various gradations to fixed characters, the years of youth rapidly glided on, till the sisters and brother arrived at that period, when their father began to be anxious about their establishment. Garcio, for so was this best of brothers called, was some years older than Elvira and Theresa, and younger than Josepha and Leonora. His settlement was speedily arranged, as he embraced the same mercantile line as his father, hoping to realise sufficient to return to the country of his ancestors, and assume the honours of his reduced house, whose noble splendour had long been sunk in poverty. Garcio

was

was brave, generous, and affectionate.—Dear lamented brother, how cruel, how mysterious was thy fate!—When Josepha had attained her seventeenth year, Monsieur de Ferroillet, who was then on a tour of Europe, visited Portugal, and became acquainted with our family. He saw and loved Josepha. They were married, and he carried his beautiful young bride to France. This was a parting of agony for Leonora, but she was forced to submit, for her parents would not permit her to accompany Monsieur and Madame de Ferroillet, although permission was most earnestly entreated.

"Three years more glided on.—Elvira had now become more than ever idolized by her parents, whose sudden starts of injudicious authority had declined, and Theresa failed not to secure their favour by the court she paid to the favourite; while Leonora, neglected and unnoticed, as she possessed neither beauty nor brilliant talents, was at liberty to sigh alone in regret the loss

loss of her beloved Josepha; and Elvira soon experienced a severe loss in the death of her father. Shortly after this event, Elvira suddenly quitted her mother's house, and Theresa accompanied her. All search after these fugitives proved in vain; and a year of affliction, marked by the death of their mother, stole on; she died broken hearted for the loss of Elvira.

"Garcio, who had been half a year married ere her demise, was scarcely less aggrieved by the flight of his sisters, and after having exerted the most unwearied efforts to discover their retreat, he learned that they resided with two gentlemen, in an elegant villa on the banks of the Tagus, some miles distant from Lisbon.

"To describe the agony of injured honour which seized his generous heart, would be in vain. He delayed not a moment in flying to the abode of infamy, for such he could not doubt was the secret residence of his sisters.—Alas! he arrived not to avenge his honour, but to witness the most terrible event.

event. It was almost night when he reached the villa—it seemed deserted; the doors were open, and no lights illumined the interior of the edifice.—He wildly entered, calling aloud on the names of Elvira and Theresa.—A faint and distant shriek at length replied to his reiterated calls.—He stopped and listened — the cry was repeated. Guided by the beams of a full moon, he rushed towards the spot from whence the sound proceeded, and entered a small room, where, by the light of a glimmering taper, he beheld a female extended on the floor, and writhing in agony. —He seized the light, and on examining the features, he discovered it was Theresa. She was richly habited, but her dress was torn and disordered, and beside her lay the dead body of a lovely male infant.—With an agonized groan of horror, Garcio started back in dismay, and revenge slept.—Terror and pity pleaded in his noble bosom.—He raised the miserable Theresa in his arms.—

She looked in his face — shrieked, and fainted.

"When she recovered, she wildly enquired for Elvira, and, in an incoherent manner, called her a murderess; and cried aloud on the name of Louis, which the unhappy brother too soon learned was the name of the dead infant.

"A violent burst of tears restored the lost Theresa to recollection, and voluntarily she told her brother a tale of horror. —It appeared that two young Frenchmen had seen them accidentally at Oporto, had professed to love, and had carried on a secret correspondence with them, which ended in their flying from their home, and resigning themselves to their lovers, who conducted them to the villa, where they had all lived in infamous pleasure till a few days previous to the arrival of Garcio, when their seducers decamped, leaving Elvira a distracted mother. In the first moments of discovering that her base lover had

had deserted her, she vowed the most horrible revenge; and, oh! dreadful effect of untamed passion, sacrificed the lovely infant at her bosom, by suddenly dashing it on the marble pavement, where it instantly expired.——My hand trembles, and my eyes grow dim, as I record the monstrous act.—She then fled from the villa.

"The horror and remorse which had now seized Theresa, deprived her almost of her reason, and she had lain two days, bewailing in stupid grief the death of the infant, in which state she was found by her brother.

"As soon as the horror and astonishment which had sealed for awhile the lips of the trembling Garcio ceased, he asked whether there were any servants in the villa, and Theresa informed him, that they had all as suddenly disappeared as their masters.—But to conclude this horrid tale —my brother sent for a neighbouring friar, and telling him the child had died in a fit, procured for the body proper interment.

He then set off with Theresa, whom he placed in a convent of penitents on the borders of Spain. From her he learned that the names of the seducers of his sisters were De Torville, and De Barre; and that they were Parisians of fortune and consequence. This was all this misguided creature could acquaint him with.

"My brother left the degraded Theresa to her repentance, and returned home to settle his affairs, previous to his visiting France, in pursuit of the miscreants who had destroyed the honour and happiness of his family, and to repeat his instructions to the active agents he had employed at Lisbon, to trace and secure the abandoned lost Elvira, of whose death he was assured, ere he had finished the arrangement of his concerns, one of his agents writing him word that she had thrown herself into the Tagus, several articles of her dress having been found on a high bank, which overhung the river at the foot of the villa gardens.

"Was it possible to avoid rejoicing at her

her death?—poor Garcio did so—he was glad she did not recover her reason after the death of her child.—Soon after, my brother took an affecting leave of his beloved wife and her infant son, and set off for France. —She did not survive his absence three months, for we never received any letter from him after the first month. Thus was I (for in Francesca, Adelaide, you have often beheld Leonora) left desolate with the infant, who, always sickly, resisted all my cares, and soon slept beside its mother.

"Who shall say, that they are certain they could not support such or such a train of sorrows, and live?—Alas! *my* heart did not break. A year passed on, and no tidings reached me of Garcio. I concluded he had fallen in a duel with one of the seducers; and at length was prevailed upon, by my beloved Josepha and her husband, to leave Portugal, and reside with them in France.

"M. Ferroillet came and conducted me on this journey, but alas! his appearance

only convinced me that affliction in a new form was about to visit my kind, affectionate sister. Her husband was evidently in a rapid decline, and all my fears were verified by his dying in about a month after I reached France. Josepha had the piety as well as the beauty of an angel—she wept her husband's loss, but she wept him with tears from which resignation and hope stole half their bitterness.—While yet in her weeds, some business called her to Paris, whither I accompanied her. In the select and amiable circle of my sister's friends, we heard not much of the noise of fashion; but at this time the public attention was rather engaged by the circumstance of a rich and old financier having lately married a beautiful young Portuguese, whom he had run away with from a convent, where she had been a boarder.

"The very day we heard this report, we beheld the financier and his lady passing by in an open carriage. What was my astonishment on recognizing in the really beautiful,

beautiful, but highly dressed and rouged woman of fashion, my sister Theresa!—Madame de Ferroillet had made the same discovery.—She tottered to a chair and fainted, while I, convinced that Theresa's heart was depraved beyond reform, was equally overpowered.

"We quitted Paris as soon as possible, and lived in solitary seclusion for some time at the chateau de Ferroillet, where my sister, my beloved Josepha, was adored as the friend of the poor and afflicted. Hers was truly the life which becomes the wealthy. Riches in her beneficent hand was the cornucopia that profusely scattered plenty around. Luxury was unknown at her board, but charity and content walked hand in hand through her domains. But ah! while this angel woman diffused happiness and blessings around her, she secretly pined away her life.—The ruin of her sisters, the loss of her brother, the death of her husband, and above all, the conduct of the unprincipled Theresa, who was now a woman of suspect-

ed gallantry, and a finished gamester, deeply affected her spirits. She thought she was resigned; but alas! an unconscious hopelessness consumed her heart, and in less than five years she finished her earthly career.—I flew to hide my sorrows in the convent of Santa Catherina, where I soon after took the veil.—The estates of Madame de Ferroillet devolved to a distant relation of her husband, who soon after sold the chateau, which, I learned to my utter dismay, was purchased by the Duc de ——, and presented to Madame de Beauvais, who was now a widow.—Theresa soon after took possession. Without feeling or delicacy, the sight of this residence, which had been built and furnished under the direction of Madame de Ferroillet's taste, did not cause her one uneasy sensation; and all those decorations and ornaments which Josepha delighted in, only as they were a source of pleasure to her husband, are, I believe, retained to this day.

"And now, my dear Adelaide," continued

nued Francesca, " when you reflect that *I* reside in the convent of Santa Catherina, you must feel certain that Madame de Beauvais had no serious intention of suffering you to come hither.—You now fully know Theresa; beware of her. She has maintained a *doubtful* character with infinite address, and she has too much art to expose herself by any public act of flagrant guilt; but she is a serpent hid in a flowery wreath. Her connexion with the Marquis, your uncle, has been doubtless occasioned by her husband, Monsieur de Beauvais, who, I have heard, was of a very worthy, although simple and unsuspecting, disposition, being nearly related to the late Marchioness St. Viviers. The aid she gives to his present plans proceeds, I fear, from her having involved herself in some gambling debts. But despair not—*you* can *perceive* the precipices which surround you——"

A slight tap at the anti-room door, obliged the horror-stricken Adelaide to hurry away her papers; it was Fanchon, who, with a million of apologies, besought forgiveness for her long delay; and, perceiving a book on the table, hoped Mademoiselle had not sat up waiting for her.

Adelaide most readily assured her that her delay had been no inconvenience, as she had been deeply engaged in reading; and then retired to bed.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

TO sleep, however, was an impossibility to Adelaide: the contents of this little history she had been reading, had affixed an impression on her mind which afflicted her beyond expression. A dreadful conjecture that Elvira de Dumont, and the sister Magdalena, were the same person, filled her soul with dismay and grief; and the too probable idea that her lamented father might have been the seducer of this vengeful nun during his short stay in Portugal, became almost confirmed into conviction, when she thought on the attack which the nun had made on the life of the

Count. Yet, when she reflected that could such have been the case, it seemed so highly improbable that Madame de Beauvais would associate with the brother of her sister's seducer, that she almost believed that some impostor must have assumed the name of her father. Still, however, she was inexpressibly shocked; a shuddering horror crept through her frame, and a deep groan of mental anguish burst from her trembling lips, as the horrible scene of her father's death dwelt on her affrighted memory.—She spent the night in a state of inexpressible misery; and the first faint glimmering of the early dawn beheld her pacing her room, with hurried steps, and almost distracted mind.

As the light increased, and rendered visible every object in her apartment, she accidentally perceived a small slip of paper lying near the foot of the dressing-table, on which she had carelessly thrown the petition the preceding night. She stooped and took it up, and on opening it, perceived that

that it was a small billet, in a hand-writing not known to her. It was signed Baptista; and she soon found it had been addressed to her by the monk who had delivered to her the packet from the Abbess of Santa Catherina. It contained a few lines only, advising her not to fail being present at the masqued ball, about to be given by Madame de Beauvais, and to attire herself in the habit of a female peasant; but to wear her mask as seldom as possible, that she might be the easier recognised by a person who, habited as a friar, would be in waiting to seize the first opportunity of conveying her from the chateau to the arms of a dear friend.

This little incident, by turning the thoughts of Adelaide in some degree from the dreadful subject which had just so deeply and painfully engaged them, greatly relieved her oppressed heart. She now felt that the duty she owed to her own honour, and to the memory of her parents and St. Croix, commanded her to exert herself

herself to fly from the power of a man, who seemed to harbour the most cruel designs against her peace; and, in the anticipation of soon enjoying the tranquillity which she could hope to find only in a convent, she experienced all the soothing influence of returning confidence in the protection of Heaven, while, with a mind devout and resigned, she knelt and implored the assistance of that gracious Power who ever listens to the prayer of innocence, for the eternal felicity of those dear lamented ones, whose images were ever present to her memory. A serene and pensive sorrow succeeded her devotions, and she descended to breakfast with a determination of endeavouring to retain the serious religious composure which now diffused itself over her lately troubled mind.

The calmness of her looks deceived Madame de Beauvais, who now augured much from the placidity of her young guest, and could scarce contain the animated expressions of triumph which hovered on her lips,

lips, when Adelaide intimated her intention of being at the ball, and even requested that her dress, which, she mentioned, might be speedily procured.

Soon after breakfast, the Marquis made his appearance; and now all the internal emotion of Adelaide revived; yet she felt in some small degree consoled, by the hope of being soon freed from his dreaded power. Still, however, she could not endure the idea of remaining even for a few minutes in his society; and, under the plea of making some little preparations for the following night, she withdrew to her own apartment.

Animated to exertion by the pleasing hope of succeeding in her meditated escape, she collected, into as small a compass as possible, several little articles she might want when her disguise should be thrown off; and as she was thus occupied, she perceived not the lapse of time, till Fanchon came to inform her that dinner was served.

Her unaltered dress gave her an excuse for

for absenting herself; and she passed the remainder of the day in her own room. Her involuntary sad reflections would, however, have rendered solitude most painful, had she not found her meditations frequently interrupted by poor Cæsar; for the animal still followed her every where, and by incessantly watching her slightest motions, unavoidably drew her attention to himself. Desolate and oppressed as she was, Adelaide could not but feel a very sensible regard for this animal, and she had considered him both as a friend and protector, from the hour in which his sudden appearance in the solitary inn, had saved her from the dangers with which she was then apparently environed. How to make the dog a companion of her expected flight, now formed no small subject of her thoughts, for the idea of leaving him behind was insupportable. That he would follow her at all events, she very justly supposed; but then there was a probability that the animal might furnish a clue to her discovery,

discovery, and she resolved, if possible, to take him with her. She passed this night more tranquilly than she had done the preceding one, and for some hours she might have lost, in the calm oblivion of sleep, the remembrance of her troubles, had not her still agonized memory but too intently reverted to the manuscript of the sister Francesca.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

THE morning of the gala day was ushered in with all the busy bustle of gay preparation: Madame de Beauvais, however, had little to do; she was too indolent, and possessed of too little taste, to attend to the arrangement of her magnificent apartments, and therefore passed the morning in her dressing-room, and occupied herself in selecting one of the many superb dresses which her women had displayed for her approval. That of a sultana was at length chosen; and Adelaide was summoned to view her own simple attire, which,

which, according to her desire, was the habit of a female peasant.

At an early hour in the evening the illuminated gardens, and brilliant saloons of the chateau, were filled with company. Music and mirth presided in the spacious edifice, and every heart seemed accordant to the gay and splendid scene, but that of Adelaide, who, seated by the side of Madame de Beauvais, looked anxiously through the wide folding doors of a long suite of rooms leading into that where Madame received her visitors, in the eager hope of seeing some person advance, whose dress should correspond with the description of the friend whom she was to expect.

From this abstraction to all near her, she was awakened by Madame de Beauvais, who introduced her to some personages of rank, and by the name of Mademoiselle de Monterci. Adelaide started, but was unable to interrupt one of the strangers, the Duc de L——, as he complimented her on her real name, and family honours. He then launched

launched into a strain of delicate and gallant praise of her exquisite beauty, and numberless fascinations; but was soon silenced by the serious astonishment which he perceived marked the pale cheek of the lovely girl, as, turning to Madame, she, in an almost inarticulate voice, demanded an explanation?

Madame de Beauvais smiled. — "The Marquis St. Viviers," said she, "has knelt at the feet of our gracious Monarch, and has so successfully pleaded in your behalf, that the proscription of your family is repealed: for your sake, Mademoiselle, the imputed crimes of your brave but mistaken grandfather are forgiven; you are allowed to re-assume your family name, De Monterci, and the restoration of all the forfeited estates will be yours, on your marriage with the generous Marquis, whose hand the King commands you to receive."

Unspeakable amazement and terror now so much overpowered the faculties of Adelaide, that she was nearly sinking lifeless to the

the earth, when the Duc, who had been a most attentive and surprised observer of what was passing, flew to her assistance, and offered to lead her into the air; when the Marquis, in the dress of an Indian chief, approached, and, eagerly catching the fainting girl in his arms, bore her hastily by a private door into the gardens; but his precipitate action had only caused the effect he had wished to prevent, as her horror on his encircling her in his arms had entirely deprived her of her senses. On re-opening her eyes, she perceived that she was still supported by the Marquis. Shrinking from him in terror and disgust, she heard not his rapid expressions of mingled tenderness and reproach, but endeavoured to escape from his embrace.

The gardens were full of groups of dancers and loiterers, but the spot to which the Marquis had carried her was rather remote. It was, however, very brilliantly illuminated by the lamps, which hung in glittering festoons around a small rustic

rustic temple within a few paces of the mossy bank on which he had placed her; and as she struggled to free herself from the hold of the Marquis, she perceived a tall figure advance from behind a dark clump of myrtle, who paused for a moment, cast on her a look of earnest enquiry, and then, starting back, glided swiftly across the walk, and disappeared amid a group of Savoyards, who came singing and laughing towards the temple.

The Marquis now released her, and she essayed with trembling limbs to reach the house, but he still continued by her side, till they were met by Madame de Beauvais and the Duc de L——. The Marquis now resigned her to the care of Madame, and led the Duc to another part of the gardens.

Adelaide falteringly insisted upon being permitted to retire to her own room, and thither Madame instantly consented to attend her; and the bewildered and amazed girl now asked whether the singular account

count which she had recently received in the saloon was really fact? and Madame seriously assured her, that nothing could be more true.—"The story is too long to tell you now, my dear young friend," continued she, in the most sweetly insinuating manner, "but every thing will be shortly explained to your satisfaction." Madame then enquired whether she imagined she would soon be sufficiently recovered to be able to join the company, or whether she would choose some refreshment in her own apartment, and retire to repose? Adelaide faintly desired to be left alone; and Madame de Beauvais withdrew, promising to send Fanchon, and another of her women, to attend on the wishes of her young guest.

The moment she was alone, Adelaide found relief in tears; she threw herself, in an agony of grief, on the sofa, and while Cæsar stood mournfully beside her, she wept excessively.

A slight tap at the door caused her to start

start from the sofa, and, ere she could reach it, it was opened gently, and Father Baptista appeared.—He made a motion for her to throw on a large cloak, which he presented to her; and Adelaide, while hastily obeying him, pointed to Cæsar, and enquired whether she might be suffered to take him? The friar looked chagrined, but, after a moment's hesitation, he said, "Yes."

In a moment she was equipped, and tying a ribbon to the collar of the dog, led him on, and followed Baptista into the lofty corridor, which was brightly illuminated by a large chandelier, which hung pendant from the roof of the hall.

Timidly she whispered to the friar her fear of discovery.—He motioned her to silence, and opened a door not far from her own room, and which led into a wide gallery, from whence branched off a small passage terminated by a private staircase. As they entered the gallery, the friar drew from beneath his cloak a small wax taper, which

which he lighted at one of the lamps on the corridor, and then conducted his affrighted companion down the private staircase, into a small room, which opened by a glass door on one of the terraces, from whence a broken and neglected flight of stone steps brought them into the shrubbery, where she had deposited her packet. The monk now extinguished the light, and, taking the hand of the trembling Adelaide, led her cautiously along the tangled path, till they reached a dilapidated wall, when he gently lifted her over the fallen fragments into the public road, where, by the clear star-light, she perceived a chaise and four horses in waiting.

The monk now supported her to the carriage, and, putting a small packet into her hand, told her there was a person in the chaise whom the Lady Abbess had sent to conduct her to a place of safety, and that the contents of the packet would explain the rest. He now raised her into the carriage, and the dog leaped in after her,

but growled a little at a stranger, who occupied the farthest corner, till the soft voice of his mistress silenced him, and the horses set off at full speed.

Adelaide now distinguished the voice of her companion, who she found was a man; she was involuntarily shocked and disappointed, but the respectful language of the stranger, and his perfect knowledge of every thing relative to herself, left her no doubt of his being a faithful agent of the Abbess; she thought, however, that she had heard his voice before, and on her saying so, he acknowledged she was right, as he had, more than once, beheld her both at her home and in the parlour of the convent, when she was only a child. The stranger, who now said his name was Le Luc, spoke mournfully of her father, and reverted to so many circumstances which she remembered to have happened in her home during her early years, that, deeply affected, she wept, and began to entertain the most favourable opinion of her guide. They

travelled with such speed, delaying merely to change horses, that when the morning dawned, Adelaide had the satisfaction of hearing that they were many leagues from the chateau, a circumstance which did not surprise her, as she imagined they were taking a circuitous route to the Convent of Santa Catherina, to elude pursuit. As soon, however, as she opened the packet, which she did with the morning light, she found that her destination was very different. It contained a pocket-book, filled with bank-notes, and a letter from the Abbess, which ran as follows:—

"Be not alarmed, my beloved Adelaide, on finding that you are travelling under the protection of a stranger, in a direction very distant from the convent.—Would time permit, I would explain why this is so; but at present, it is impossible

to tell you more than that M. Le Luc was once an intimate friend of your family, and that he is conducting you to an asylum where all your sorrows will cease to exist. Confide in this virtuous man.

"ANGELINA."

When Adelaide had concluded this short and mysterious epistle, she turned towards M. Le Luc, and enquired whither he was conducting her? The increasing light displayed the features of the stranger; they were characteristic of benevolence and good-nature.

He smiled, and replied — "My dear young lady must pardon me, when I inform her that my instructions do not permit me to hazard agitating her mind, by revealing to her——"

At this moment a pistol was fired into the carriage window, at Le Luc; Adelaide shrieked, and fainted. — Alas! when she revived,

revived, she found herself in another chaise, supported by the Marquis St. Viviers, who was loudly calling to one of his servants, who rode beside the carriage, to shoot the dog through the head.

Adelaide's shriek of agony, and uplifted hands, caused him instantly to countermand his savage order, and he contented himself with directing that the animal should be held whenever he alighted.—"On your conduct depends the life of that furious beast, Adelaide," he said, in a tone of returning gentleness.

A moment's recollection but too truly convinced the unhappy persecuted girl, that all present appearance of resistance would be highly imprudent; she therefore faintly replied, that her submission to his usurped authority could only be secured by his leaving the carriage, and suffering the dog to enter it. To the infinite surprise of Adelaide, the Marquis, after some slight remonstrance, assented; and, ordering the drivers to stop, he quitted the carriage, and

mounted a horse, which was led by one of the servants, and Cæsar was permitted to accompany his young mistress, who conceived herself to be comparatively safe while her faithful guard was near her.

They travelled day and night, with all possible speed, carefully avoiding all large towns, and being furnished with relays of horses at retired spots, whither they had been brought by the Marquis's couriers, and stopped only at small road inns, or cottages: Adelaide, however, experienced every attention which in such circumstances could be shewn her; and her fears of being conveyed to the lone house spoken of by Nannette, even in some degree dissipated, by the Marquis's solemnly assuring her that he was conducting her back to St. Viviers Castle.

He had not deceived her; for, after a very fatiguing journey, they once more beheld the tall towers and mouldering battlements of the Castle of St. Viviers.

The agony of mind, however, which Adelaide

Adelaide had suffered during the journey, rendered her so very ill, that when they arrived at the castle, she was nearly insensible to all the dangers of her situation; and on being carried back to her former apartment, all the zealous cares of Marcella were, for some time, vainly exerted in attempts to restore her to some share of animation and recollection. But her youth, and the excellence of her constitution, however, at length triumphed over the effect of her troubles; and after a few days confinement, she was once more able to leave her chamber.

CHAP. VI.

WITH this degree of reviving convalescence, most fortunately, she experienced something of that firmness of mind so essentially requisite for enabling her to attempt extricating herself from the perplexing situation in which she was still involved. —The circumstance of her friends at Santa Catherina's being informed of the nature of her embarrassing circumstances, however, afforded her some consolation. But Adelaide had not much time allowed her for reflection; for, the moment that the Marquis learnt that she was rather recovered, he sent to request permission to

to see her. Trembling at the idea of his intruding himself into her apartments, Adelaide endeavoured to attain resolution to attend him; and so well succeeded, that she soon entered his presence, with an air of collected self-possession, which he had never before beheld her assume.

Instantly hastening to conduct her to a chair, the Marquis began to compliment her on her recovery; but she drew back from his attentions with a cold and repulsive air; and immediately, in a tone of voice perfectly corresponding with her looks, she said — "I am come, my Lord, to demand an explanation of the singular, and to me unaccountable, right you profess to hold over my person and actions; and to learn by what means you have obtained such undue power?"

The Marquis now looked rather disconcerted, and did not immediately reply. At length, recovering from his temporary confusion, he said — "It is for the purpose of entering into the requisite explanations

relative to your situation, Mademoiselle de Monterci, that I have requested your presence. But to enable me to elucidate this affair, I must beg your attention to a short detail of events long since past.—The Count de Monterci, your grandfather, was the most intimate early friend of the Marquis, *my* father, and——"

"Hold, my Lord," exclaimed Adelaide, suddenly interrupting him. "Ere you proceed, in what I much fear is a mere tale, fabricated to impose on the credulity of my youth, let me warn you——"

"And you, Mademoiselle," said the Marquis, interrupting Adelaide, "suffer *me* to advise you to listen with patience to my relation, of the veracity of which, a short time will most infallibly convince you."

Adelaide was again silent; and the Marquis proceeded.

"I have already declared, that my father and the Count de Monterci were inseparable friends; they had studied together—both had signalized themselves in the same campaigns,

campaigns; and their friendship appeared to be durably cemented by their marrying two half sisters of the noble family of De Chalomont. But, alas! Mademoiselle, by a strange fatality, some political opinions of your grandfather's gave offence to the court, and the Count was obliged to retire in disgrace to his castle in the province of Guienne. At this time, *my* parents resided at St. Viviers, and thus these amiable friends were separated; nor did my mother lament the distance which divided her from a beloved sister, more than the Marquis regretted the absence of the friend of his heart.

"Two years passed on, and still the Count de Monterci remained an exile on his own estate. During this period I was born; and I was scarce a year and an half old, when one night the family were alarmed by the sudden arrival of the Count and Countess de Monterci, attended only by one servant, a venerable man, most faithfully attached to his lord.

"An interview of a few minutes, between my parents and these dear friends, was sufficient to inform them of their fate. The enemies of the Count had prevailed against him—his name was tainted with an imputation of disloyalty, and he was sentenced to perpetual banishment, while his confiscated estates were the rewards of those wretches who had completed his ruin.

"A few hours only and the Count must for ever quit France; but the delicate situation of his lady forbade her accompanying him.—He departed, almost heart-broken, ere the morning dawned, for Italy, leaving the Countess to the care of my mother, who promised to conduct her into Italy, when the period of her accouchement should be over.

"My mother was at this time still confined to her chamber, by the birth of a second son; yet still she neglected not to devote herself to consoling her afflicted sister, who within three days after the departure of her lord, gave birth to a son: but

but alas! she possessed not strength to survive the shock her husband's misfortunes had given to her health; and, in a few hours after the birth of her child, she expired, most fervently recommending the infant to the protecting care of the Marquis and her sister.

"My mother wept the loss of this dear sister with unfeigned grief, and received to her bosom the little orphan, to whom she vowed to be a mother; nor was the Marquis less inclined to befriend the son of his dearest De Monterci, whose loss he was but too soon to deplore.

"The remains of the hapless Countess were not yet consigned to the earth, when intelligence was brought to the castle, that the Count de Monterci and his faithful old servant, had both been murdered on the Italian side of the Alps, by a party of banditti; and this information was soon proved to be an undoubted fact. The poor little orphan had now indeed no friends but the Marchioness, his aunt, and the Marquis.

Marquis. And now, as if misfortune had resolved to exhaust all her shafts, the infant son of the Marchioness suddenly expired in convulsions, while my father was absent from the castle, to enquire into the exact particulars of the Count's death.

" The sudden death of her child seemed to the grief-softened mind of my mother a solemn appeal to her heart for the orphan son of her sister, and firmly believing that she ought to instantly cherish and adopt him as her own, she contrived, with the assistance of the nurses, to exchange the infants; and, while my brother was buried as the deceased orphan of the Monterci's, *your* father, Mademoiselle, was enfolded to the bosom of my mother as her acknowledged child; and singularly aided by the astonishing resemblance between your father and myself, she so well imposed on the Marquis and the domestics, that it was not till the very day preceding her death, which did not occur for twenty years afterwards, that the real truth was made known to my father,

father, who, however, was too fond of his supposed son to experience any other sensations on the occasion, than those of regret for not having been a partner in the generous plan of my mother: and, soon after the death of his lady, my father settled the valuable estate of De Cressy on his now *adopted* son, whom he did not yet acquaint with the secret of his birth, preferring, in case of my demise, that the title and possessions of St. Viviers should be inherited by the young Count de Monterci, to the extinction of his name.

"Soon after this event, your father's marriage was partly discovered by the Marquis. The Count's rejection of my late lady's hand confirmed the tale; and this affair produced the first disagreement between the Count and the benevolent protector of his infancy. And, as if every thing conspired to heighten the quarrel, your father became acquainted with his real birth and rank; and this latter circumstance, together with a more mysterious event,

event; not necessary to relate, induced him to quit, apparently for ever, the home in which he had been reared. And indeed, when I reflect on these events, I can scarcely wonder at your father's flying into obscure retirement, as the proscription against his family, and some other circumstances, must have rendered seclusion desirable to him.

"From the hour in which he so abruptly fled from the castle, I never could discover his retreat, although I had made several attempts to do so; but most ineffectual were my efforts; for, till I received a letter from Lisbon, I was entirely ignorant of what had become of him. It contained an offer of *purchasing* De Cressy.—The liberal manner in which I had lived, rendered money acceptable.—I knew it would be vain to argue with your father.—I sold De Cressy, and received remittances also to furnish it. The disappointment which followed in the death of your father, you are, Mademoiselle, too sadly acquainted with, to make

make it necessary for me to dwell on such a painful subject.—In regard to what relates to your present situation, I can inform you, that having discovered your father's secret agent at Bayonne, I found that he had a will in his possession, made previous to the Count's last visit to Lisbon, and in which he acknowledges his real name, and makes me your guardian, giving me unlimited power over your actions, on condition of restoring you, by my influence at court, to your real rank in society. This I have accomplished.—You are permitted to assume the name and honours of your noble and ancient house; and all the forfeited hereditary estates are most graciously bestowed upon you by the King.

"And now, Mademoiselle Adelaide, I believe I have most clearly explained to you whatever may have formerly appeared ambiguous in my conduct. Acquainted as I was with your real situation, was it surprising that, from the moment you came under my protection, I should meditate this,

this developement, even before I was acquainted with the wishes of the Count, your father, being similar to my own?—I am not old; there was every probability that I should survive my late wife, and might make a second choice more suitable to my years and inclinations; it would not, therefore, have been right, even if I had no heirs, to suffer my estates to fall, in your supposed right, to the Count St. Croix;—you cannot then be astonished at my wishing to delay your union, till I had cleared away all these mysteries, and established you in your rights. This was my first intention; but I had not long enjoyed the enchanting felicity of daily seeing you, ere I found that you had inspired me——"

Here Adelaide suddenly arose, and, slightly curtseying, retreated with trembling limbs towards the door.—The Marquis started up, and passionately taking her hand, entreated her to remain a few minutes, and hear him with patience.

"Impossible, my Lord; I cannot stay re-

sent attend to you—your recent narrative has rendered me utterly unfit for farther conversation; permit me to withdraw," said Adelaide, in a tone of such unfeigned emotion, that the Marquis, after prevailing upon her to say that she would see him on the following day, suffered her to retire to her own apartments.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

ADELAIDE reached her chamber in a frame of mind in which astonishment, fear, and sorrow were mingled; yet a faint ray of satisfaction gleamed on her heart, as she reflected that she was not so nearly related to the Marquis as she had heretofore supposed; and the hope that his power might now be evaded, inclined her not to perceive the many seeming improbabilities with which his relation abounded. And even allowing that the Marquis was really in possession of a will, which gave him the right of commanding her actions, that power could last but a few years; in that space

space of time, Providence might release her, by some unexpected means, from his controul. The recollection of Madame de Beauvais's assertion of the King's having commanded her union with the Marquis, she could not explicitly credit; but she now plainly perceived that, in order to escape the power of her persecutor, she must submit to temporise, especially as such a mode of conduct seemed to present the only means of inducing him to treat her with respect and consideration.

In this reflection Adelaide was strongly influenced, by her earnest wish of relieving her beloved Henrietta, if indeed her interference was not too late. She trembled with horror as the dread of such an event rushed on her mind; and, forgetting in her terrors for Henrietta, the consistency of manners it was necessary for her to observe, she hastened to seek the Marquis, and found him still in the apartment where she had left him. He was now apparently engaged in writing letters.

He

He started on her entrance, and a glow of extreme pleasure and surprise brightened his really handsome features. Adelaide was overwhelmed with confusion by the ardour of his manner, as he led her to a seat. She had scarcely power to utter the name of Henrietta, and falteringly demand her deliverance.

The Marquis now looked excessively embarrassed.—He regarded her for a moment with a glance of earnest attention, and at length said—"I am then now indebted for your presence to the interest you feel for your young English friend? and I perceive that Nannette has told you a ridiculous tale, partly true, and partly false. The ignorant girl was seduced by Bionville, whose only defect is his blameable propensity to gallantry. He detected De Valmont in a plan he had formed for carrying off Henrietta, whom he himself passionately loves.—The Chevalier disappointed his ward, who was immediately put into confinement for his folly, while his fortunate

fortunate guardian conducted the young lady to his chateau, and from thence to another residence, from which, however, she soon found means to escape, with her lover, De Valmont, who had also escaped from his prison, sold his commission, and carried off the lady; and they have hitherto most successfully eluded all search."

Adelaide listened eagerly to this account, but there was so much of incredulity in her looks, that the Marquis appeared much hurt at her apparent doubts, and assured her, in the most serious and solemn manner, that he had uttered only the truth.

She was compelled to believe him, and again withdrew. On entering the anti-room of her apartments, she found the good old Jaques there, caressing Cæsar, and waiting to pay his respects to herself. But the old man did not waste much time in his honest congratulations; he almost immediately gave her a small billet, which, he said, had been left with him a few days prior to her return to the castle.

The billet was from De Valmont, and, to the

the inexpressible joy of Adelaide, confirmed the account just given to her by the Marquis. It contained a very brief relation of the disappointment he had met with in his first attempt to carry off Henrietta, owing to the treachery of the servant he had employed—mentioned his confinement—his escape—the sale of his commission, which, he said, he should honourably account for when he had again the good fortune of beholding her; and then related that he had been successful in delivering his beloved Henrietta from her vile guardian, and had at length concealed her in a place of safety, from whence he should employ proper agents to procure the liberation of Adelaide also, whom he entreated to hold herself in constant readiness.

It is needless to say how much satisfaction and hope this billet imparted to the mind of Adelaide. Devoutly she thanked Heaven for the knowledge of her friend's safety; and implored the aid of Providence in her own behalf.

Jaques watched for the conclusion of her

her pious respiration, with eyes of admiration and respectful attachment, and then said—"Ah, Mademoiselle, how frightened I have been about you while you were away!—There have been most terrible noises heard, and frightful sights seen, in the castle since you have been gone—however, there were none heard last night, and so I hope we shall have some peace.—But it's no wonder if they should return again, when people are wronged of their natural rights, and disowned in such a manner.—Why, I hear, Mademoiselle, that it has been discovered that you have no claim to the name of St. Viviers. Well—I remember the Count and Countess de Monterci and their old servant being here, as well as if it was only yesterday that it happened; but I'm sure I can't think how my dear young master Louis could ever be their son—however, there is certainly no knowing what great folks may do, when they once take a whim in their heads. Madame le Marquise was of a very odd

temper sometimes, but she was truly good and charitable at others.—She *might* have exchanged the infants, to be sure; but it's very odd that your father's nurse, Mademoiselle, who was my own sister, and loved me dearly, never told *me* any thing about the matter.—But then, it has all been *proved* in Paris, I hear, and so it does not signify saying any more about the matter.—But I hope it is not true, Mademoiselle, that you are going to be married to your uncle—the Marquis of St. Viviers, I mean?"

Adelaide, whose astonishment was extreme on finding Jaques so well acquainted with every particular of her situation, now asked him from whom he had derived his present knowledge of her circumstances? and he instantly informed her in reply, that the Marquis had, soon after his arrival on the preceding evening, assembled all his household in the great hall, where he had formally acquainted them with the recent discovery relative to the real name and rank of herself; and commanded them to address

address her with all the respectful homage which was due to her as their future mistress.

The indignation and dismay of Adelaide, on hearing that the Marquis had so publicly and confidently spoken of their projected union as a settled fact, were unbounded, and she instantly resolved to avail herself of every opportunity which might offer of undeceiving the domestics, respecting her ever having assented to the intended marriage. She therefore explained to Jaques her real sentiments; and the good old man, while he rejoiced in her determination never to become the wife of the Marquis, again promised all his assistance in aiding her to fly from the castle.

She thanked him with grateful affability and meekness; and Jaques, more than ever charmed with his young lady, led Cæsar away, as the entrance of Marcella prevented all farther conversation.

The loquacious Marcella would now have been extremely disappointed, had she

not found Adelaide apparently inclined to listen to the relation she commenced, of the terrible wonders which had occurred in the castle, and of the horrible sights which had been seen in it, during her short absence; some of which indeed appeared to have been so singular, that Adelaide could not long refrain from listening to her with attention and awe; nor could she hear, with very comfortable sensations, that the great eastern gallery, at the opposite end of the corridor, had been one of the principal scenes of horror. *There,* Marcella, pale at the recollection, affirmed that the ghost of the deceased Marchioness had been seen, roaming and lamenting, with frightful cries and shrieks, not five evenings past; and that several of the servants had seen all the windows of their late lady's apartments, in the south wing, illumined with blazes of fire at midnight, while the great bell of the castle had tolled quick and violently for near ten minutes, and that it ceased just as all the fire in the Marchioness's rooms vanished;

vanished; and that Jerome, the Marquis's old confidential valet, who arrived the night before his lord, had seen the spirit as he lay in bed, after all the inhabitants of the castle were fast asleep, and it had said something so very dreadful to him, that he had been almost raving mad ever since.

Adelaide enquired whether the Marquis had been made acquainted with these dreadful facts?

"M. Andre, the steward, Mademoiselle, is now at this very minute shut up with my Lord in his study, and telling him all about it," replied Marcella; "and so I suppose we shall have some pious fathers sent for to speak to, and exorcise the poor, unquiet spirit.—If Father Bertrand, the Marquis's confessor, had not been gone away on a long journey, he would have been here, and settled it all long before now."

Adelaide trembled at the name of that monk, for the mere mention of him had recalled most painfully to her mind the horrible idea of his having been the assassin

her beloved, lamented St. Croix, her grief for whose loss was preying slowly on her heart, and insidiously undermining her life: for while her circumstances demanded exertion, and she could not indulge the pining sorrow which lurked in her bosom, she fancied that in the calm of religious seclusion she should find resignation and peace; yet one hour of solitude never failed to revive in her mind all the tenderness and grief of hapless love, and to throw over her spirits the dark veil of settled and unavailing sorrow. In such hours, she closed her eyes on all external objects, and hid her tears from the light of the sun, turning with sickening disgust from every earthly idea, and yielding to the enthusiastic pictures which devout hope presented of futurity.

Recovering partly from the emotion of horror which the name of Father Bertrand occasioned her to suffer, she once more endeavoured to divert her sad thoughts, by attending to Marcella's continued account of

of the supernatural objects of alarm which had so recently terrified the domestics, but had nearly, notwithstanding her having herself more than once witnessed some of the singular horrors which had occurred previous to her departure, sunk into compleat incredulity, by her ancient attendant's seriously declaring that she herself had seen, not seven nights back, a large frightful-looking figure, all black, and shaped like a monstrous bear, standing in the middle of the south hall, and which, on her entering with the candle, had sunk down into the marble pavement just close to the great pillars that ran along one side of it, next to the late Marchioness's favourite saloon.

Adelaide endeavoured to persuade her that she had been deceived by the shadows of the pillars; but Marcella persisted in the truth of what she had seen; and her young lady's spirits were now too much oppressed to enter into any argument on the subject.

The day passed on heavily, for Adelaide felt an increasing dejection steal over her mind; and at night, when she retired to bed, she was a prey to the most superstitious and harrowing fears; but it, however, glided on without any disturbance, and, towards the dawn, feeling security in the guardianship of her Almighty Protector, she sunk into a deep slumber.

CHAP. VIII.

SOON after she had breakfasted on the next morning, she again received a message from the Marquis, requesting permission to see her. This summons she obeyed with trembling reluctance; but, conscious that to betray her fears and uneasiness would be highly impolitic, she attempted to assume an appearance of composure, and entered his presence with an air of calm dignity, which involuntarily obtained his respect: but her prudent collected manner had nearly failed her, on perceiving the Marquis, pale and agitated, seated before a table, on which was scattered

several papers and letters, together with the ivory box and miniature, which had been put into her hands by her father.

Rising, and leading her to a seat, the Marquis said—" Sometime before we left St. Viviers, Mademoiselle, you may remember that you sent me the box containing these papers. Till this day I have not had leisure to examine them, and I almost wish that chance had prevented me from doing so at present, as the full discovery I have just made, of an event but slightly known to me before, is of the most distressing and dreadful nature.—Alas! the mystery which attended your father's death is now but too well explained."

The shivering sensation of horror which convulsed the delicate frame of Adelaide, and the pale hue of fearful expectation which stole over her cheek, gave a sudden check to the speech of the Marquis. He paused, then sat down beside her, and attempted to take her chilled hand. The disgust which his attentions ever excited in the

the bosom of Adelaide, proved, in this instance at least, of sufficient efficacy to overcome her distress; and endeavouring to re-assume an air of composure, she mildly repulsed his officious tenderness, and assuring him that she now found herself capable of listening to him, begged he would proceed. Mortified and chagrined, he once more seated himself at the table, and, turning over several of the letters, resumed the subject, which her too evident perturbation had interrupted.

"Your father, Mademoiselle, under the name of De Torville, (Adelaide started) and accompanied by another person, who had assumed the name of De Barre, visited Oporto some years back, and while there, seduced two lovely young women from the bosom of paternal love, and secreted these infatuated girls in infamy, at a villa not far from Lisbon. But at length they barbarously deserted their victims; one of whom is now, however, a lady of most amiable manners, and——"

"Oh, most certainly!" faltered Adelaide—"I know that Madame de Beauvais and Theresa de Dumont are the same person—and by the hand of *her* injured sister, my unhappy father fell."

The Marquis started, and, after gazing for a moment in agitated silence on the almost fainting Adelaide, said—"How did you receive this information, Mademoiselle?"

The now distracted mind of Adelaide rendered her incapable of reflection, and she instantly replied, by informing the Marquis of her having received from the sister Francesca the whole history of the Dumont family. The Marquis now made several enquiries respecting this relation; and soon learned that sister Francesca had no idea that *his* once supposed brother had been the seducer of Elvira.

The Marquis, after another short pause, said—"I must inform you, Mademoiselle, that Madame de Beauvais is equally ignorant as Francesca that the *supposed* Count St.

St. Viviers was one of the betrayers of those unfortunate sisters. The events which I shall continue to relate, will convince you of the necessity of her remaining so. —It is now six years since I first beheld Madame de Beauvais. As her husband was related to the late Marchioness, I called on her at Paris, at the request of my lady, and although so many years had elapsed, her recollection of that strong accidental likeness which the Count, your father, bore to me, led her to suppose that *I* was the author of her sister Elvira's disgrace. In the first moments of confusion, an eclaircissement took place between us; and after becoming acquainted with her story, I succeeded in convincing her, that I was at the castle residing with my lady, at that period of her life in which she had resided at Lisbon; but although I could not fail in proving to her *my* own innocence, I did not divulge the secret of my supposed brother's being the criminal; and to this hour Madame de Beauvais is unsuspicious

of

of the fact. How cruel then to the memory of your father, and her own peace, would be any present divulgement of the truth!—But certainly I need not expatiate on a subject, in which the propriety of silence and secrecy will soon be undeniably evident to yourself, Mademoiselle.

"Your perusal of this letter," he continued, presenting her one, "will convince you better than my words: it was written by a person who has subscribed himself by the name of De Barre, the name of your father's companion in this dreadful affair.—If you can find courage to peruse it, Adelaide, you must, I repeat, soon perceive the necessity of being silent, as to an event which cannot now be remedied, and would brand your father's name with infamy."

Adelaide, with trembling hands, while the mist of sorrow dimmed her eyes, took the letter, and read to herself as follows:—

"Unfortunate

"Unfortunate St. Viviers—companion, participator of my guilt, why did you urge me to desert those hapless beings, whom our seductive arts had plunged into infamy and ruin?—We fled—we enjoyed for a season the dissipated delirium of mad riot and licentious pursuits;—but ah! I am awakened to a horrible sense of my guilt, by a circumstance most shocking.—The brother of these miserable forsaken victims has been in Paris.—He discovered our real names—we fought—were both dangerously wounded;—I have neither seen nor heard any more of him.—But as I lay on my bed, I fear, of death, the Portuguese servant, Lopez, whom we hired at Lisbon, suddenly entered my room, and besought me to take him once more into my service, as he dreaded being taken up at Lisbon by the friends of Don Garcio de Dumont. He then recounted the particulars of Garcio's visit to Lisbon, and his discovery of his sisters—all this I already had heard from Garcio himself; but Lopez also informed

informed me that Elvira still lives!—Oh! she has, with her own hands, destroyed her child; and, in an agony of madness at being deserted, fettered herself with the most horrible and unheard-of vow, to take, if possible, the life of her seducer, if she can ever discover him.—She has retired, in this frame of mind, to a convent of the Miserecordia.—Beware! the vengeance of one of her nation never dies—neither time, nor penitence, can soften the obduracy of such a heart as hers.—Hasten, therefore, to the castle; and—oh! that you could now reveal all to your brother, and demand his advice.—Alas! I fear I am dying.—Adieu, unfortunate and guilty friend.—Suffer me once more to warn you to beware the vengeance of Elvira.

"De Barre."

The Marquis, who had been most anxiously attentive to the varying countenance

nance of Adelaide, during her perusal of the letter, now took it gently out of her hand, and, alarmed by the indescribable anguish of her looks, addressed her in the most soothing and affectionate style.—Alas! she heard him not; her whole soul was occupied by the horrible conviction, that her father, in the journey he had made into Portugal, just after his marriage, must have been the seducer of the revengeful nun of Miserecordia; and thus was her attack upon his life most fatally explained. Who can conceive the horror and anguish with which Adelaide was now seized!—wildly she started from the contemplation of the dreadful result of his crime, and now demanded whether the Count, her father, had obeyed the advice of the guilty De Barre, and taken refuge at the castle?

"He did, Mademoiselle," replied the Marquis, after a short pause.—"It was prior to the period when the Count became acquainted with his real birth, and he flew to me, and partly avowed his fault, in an

an agony of remorse; but alas! the very evening he came home, a stranger arrived at the castle—he demanded a private interview with the Count St. Viviers.—'It is Garcio!' cried my brother, and hurried to meet him.—I saw him not till midnight, when he suddenly rushed into my chamber—his hands were covered with blood—'Eustace, awake,' he groaned, and arouzed me from my slumber.—'We have fought—Garcio is dead——'" Here the Marquis trembled violently—his voice faltered—large drops of agony stood on his forehead—he had scarcely power to add—"From that night I never more beheld your father—but the horrible object which St. Croix discovered concealed in the vaults, was the body of the murdered Garcio!"

Adelaide fell lifeless from her chair; and the Marquis, overcome by his own emotions, stood vacantly gazing on her beautiful form without the power of raising her, till, slowly turning his eyes, he beheld close at his side M. Andre, who had entered

tered unperceived, and who now begged permission to assist the young lady.

Instantly the Marquis started from his reverie, and, in his own arms, bore the still fainting Adelaide to her apartments, where, on perceiving her revive, he left her to the care of Marcella, and retired, in a state of the most agonized feeling.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

THE almost incessant shocks which the mind of the hapless Adelaide had of late received, had rendered grief and horror most familiar to her heart; but all the mental agonies she had ever experienced were faint to those which racked her soul when she once more recovered from her swoon. Indescribable terrors seized her mind, when the horrible idea occurred that her beloved, lamented parent had really been the seducer of Elvira de Dumont, and the murderer of her brother—that brother, whom the sorrowing sister Francesca of Santa Catherina had described as the most

worthy

worthy of men. Unable to endure the society of any human being, Adelaide fled from the officious cares of her attendant; and, shutting herself up in her chamber, yielded herself a prey to the distraction and woe which nearly overwhelmed her senses.—The little history of the Dumont family, and the explanation of the Marquis, had given her undeniable conviction, that Elvira, and the sister Magdalena of Miserecordia, were but too surely the same person; and that revengeful nun's conduct towards her unhappy parent as clearly evinced that he had indeed been her seducer.—Yet, apparently evident as were these facts, filial affection and veneration for the author of her being, inclined the duteous Adelaide almost to doubt the possibility of the Count's having been the depraved and libertine character which these newly-discovered circumstances seemed to imply. But these doubts were but the doubts of a moment; the *death* of her father was a *proof* of his guilt, which admitted

mitted not of the indulgence of incredulity on the subject.—" My father then was a seducer, and—oh, horrible! a *murderer* also!" groaned the miserable Adelaide, while a pang of horror darted through her brain, and almost added frenzy to her sufferings.

After some moments of unspeakable wretchedness, the strange singularity of Madame de Beauvais's intimacy with the once supposed brother of her sister's destroyer, occurred to the memory of the afflicted girl; and this circumstance, by exciting in her mind the utmost amazement, fortunately tended to diversify her thoughts. Was it possible, she reflected, that Madame de Beauvais could in *reality* be utterly unconscious of the supposed relationship of the pretended De Torville to the Marquis St. Viviers?

It was certain that the history of her family, penned by the sister Francesca, mentioned Theresa's pleading to her brother an entire ignorance of all relating to the

the seducers of herself and her sister, except that their names were De Torville and De Barre;—of course a probability did exist, that this culpable woman was at least still as uninformed on the subject as she had been at the period of Garcio's discovering her in Lisbon. That Madame de Beauvais was entirely unacquainted with every circumstance relative to the Nun of Miserecordia's dreadful visit to her father, and its fatal termination, Adelaide well knew, as the Marquis had most particularly charged her not to mention the affair to any human being, except those already acquainted with it; and this prohibition had extended even to the Marchioness; therefore Henrietta Vernor and the late Count St. Croix were the only beings acquainted with the circumstance, except Adelaide herself, and the Marquis.

The longer the unhappy victim of affliction reflected on this point, the more she became of opinion that Madame de Beauvais, immersed in dissipation and gaiety, had

had never discovered that the author of her sister's destruction had had any connexion with the Marquis St. Viviers. And now Adelaide most truly felt how painful a situation she had avoided, by never having revealed to Madame the circumstances of her father's death. A woman possessed of so little real sensibility as was Madame de Beauvais, could not have felt as she ought to have done in such an affair, and therefore no possible good was likely to have resulted from her being informed that the revenge of her ruined sister had been satiated by the death of her miserable seducer; that sister, buried beneath the ruins of the walls of Lisbon, was also no more; and though her awful fate might prove a warning lesson most impressive of the effects of ungoverned passions, yet Madame de Beauvais seemed to possess one of those cold, selfish minds, which are incapable of feeling, or of sympathising in the troubles of her nearest relations or friends; and, while she herself glided safely along the treacherous

treacherous stream of pleasure, she appeared to care little for the fate of those whom she beheld daily swallowed up by the vortexes of vice.

Madame de Beauvais, however, was expected to speedily visit at the castle; and as this idea recurred to Adelaide, she trembled with increased dismay at the necessity of re-entering into the society of one, whose presence was likely to keep alive in her mind those dread scenes of horror, the constant reflection on which already but too much interfered with her intentions of flying from the power of the Marquis, and devoting her days to piety and seclusion. At all events, to continue silent, on a subject which could not be touched upon without producing the most mournful and frightful results, Adelaide at length concluded would be most prudent; and she resolved henceforth to avoid the company of Madame de Beauvais as much as possible.

A long and weary fortnight was now

past by Adelaide, in the deepest affliction, and which was not alleviated at the expiration of that period, by her being one day informed that Madame de Beauvais had arrived at the castle. Vain would be any attempt to describe the terror and anguish which rent the bosom of Adelaide on again seeing this lady. To look on her without horror, when she was considered as the sister of the cruel Nun of Miserecordia, was impossible; yet when Adelaide, in all the bitterness of affliction, remembered that that nun had been seduced and dishonoured by *her* father, she could not but condemn the feelings which agitated her own bosom at the sight of Madame de Beauvais, who, whatever might be her faults, was certainly innocent of having had any share in the revenge which the nun had wreaked on her seducer.

In vain Adelaide sought to be permitted to remain in the solitary seclusion of the apartments she occupied; for the Marquis, arguing that Madame de Beauvais's visit being

being to herself, she could not possibly avoid her society, compelled the young mourner to see that lady daily; and this circumstance was more favourable for Adelaide than she herself imagined; for as she became more accustomed to see and converse with Madame, so much the less were her feelings agonized during these interviews; and at length all the resignation of religious fortitude once more dawned on her soul, and her thoughts again became occupied in the expectation and hope of at last finding peace in a convent. She was in this state of mind, when a Monsieur and a Madame Villette, both intimate friends of the Chevalier Bionville, arrived at the castle, on a visit to the Marquis. If Adelaide was before averse to society, she now more than ever abhorred being forced to join that now assembled in the castle. Madame de Villette, a tall, bold, shewy-looking woman, appeared to her delicate and refined mind the personification of audacious vice; while her husband, a meagre-

was the very figure of a great old bear; and its feet were as heavy as if they were shod with iron."

Again Adelaide looked at Madame de Beauvais for an explanation; and that lady, instantly silencing the rude vociferation of the Villettes, with a look of contempt, and a—"When these good people have done," informed Adelaide, that about ten minutes after the castle clock had struck twelve, herself and the other visitors, who all occupied apartments opening on the corridor which communicated with the east and west galleries, had distinctly heard the great bell of the castle toll three, and immediately three piercing shrieks succeeded; that all was again a dead silence for a few minutes, and that in this interval, Monsieur Villette, imagining that the shrieks proceeded from one of the terrified female attendants of his wife, who had not long left the room, opened the chamber door, with an intention of chiding the girl for her superstitious folly, when he was almost deprived

deprived of sense, by perceiving the east gallery in a blaze of light, and a tall female figure standing at the entrance, which, as with horror-fixed looks he observed it, suddenly assumed the appearance of a large uncouth bear, and with hasty strides advanced along the corridor, while the sound of its every footstep resembled the clanking of a horse's hoof. That he flung to the door, and reeled senseless into his chamber, while his wife, although nearly insensible with fright, distinctly heard the terrific footsteps proceed along the corridor, loudly repeated by the echo from the lofty roof of the hall—"I myself," continued Madame de Beauvais, "most distinctly heard the sound of those ponderous feet, mingled with the most dismal groans, and the shrill shrieks of a female voice."

Scarcely had Madame finished her last words, when the Marquis entered, with an air of ease, which the paleness of his countenance and wandering eye too plainly

evinced was but assumed. The moment he appeared, the Villettes most eagerly enquired whether he had been alarmed in the night? and, without waiting for an answer, began a long account of the terrors which they themselves had undergone; and both, rudely interrupting each other, vociferated the tale of their fright: the Marquis, while he listened with apparent patience, frequently glanced his eyes on Adelaide, with a look of the most penetrating scrutiny; and at length demanded whether she had participated in the alarms which his friends, and he must confess himself, had suffered?

Madame de Beauvais replied, that Mademoiselle de Monterci had fortunately been undisturbed; and then mentioned her own chagrin at having been awakened by such horrid sounds, which she now protested must undoubtedly have been made by some impostor, who was inclined either to rob the castle, or to terrify the inhabitants into fits.

The

The Marquis did not reply in words, but he gave Madame a look, which expressed so much conviction that there was something more than design or imposition in the noises, that she actually turned pale; but too incredulous and bold, to continue above a minute the slave of fear, she rallied all her gaiety and wit; and before the morning repast was concluded, the Marquis affected to treat the whole as a trick, and avowed his determination to punish the contrivers and executors of it with all possible severity. In this resolve he was strongly supported by his guests, the Villettes, who seemed to have too much admiration for the opinions of their fashionable friends, to suffer them to confess that they still feared that the disturbance had been created by supernatural beings.

Meanwhile Adelaide attentively listened to their debates, without joining in the conversation; and when the meal was concluded, she arose to retire, but was requested by the Marquis to allow him a few

moments conversation in private. She resumed her seat, on his adding that he had something to communicate relative to her maternal uncle, Don Alvarez de Suza, of whom some accounts had been received from Brazil. Soon after, Madame de Beauvais and the Villettes retired, and Adelaide once more found herself alone with the Marquis, who, after a short prefatory admonition to exercise patience and resignation, informed her that positive and unquestionable intelligence had been received of Don Alvarez de Suza's death; and that he had died of a fever during his preparations for a voyage to Lisbon; but that a will had been found, both at Rio-Janiero and at Lisbon, naming herself as his sole heiress.

The Marquis now produced letters, which gave to the miserable Adelaide sufficient proofs that her maternal uncle did not indeed any longer exist. To her question, as to what name Don Alvarez de Suza had called her by in his will? the Marquis replied

replied he was still ignorant, but expected a copy of the will in the course of a few days.

This circumstance of the Marquis being ignorant in what name the estates of the late Don Alvarez de Suza were willed to her, excited no small amazement in the mind of Adelaide; but she very prudently desisted from making any observation on the subject, determining to wait the arrival of the expected letters, ere she confessed the nature of those suspicions which the incident had excited.

The Marquis now interrupted her silent reflections, by requesting her opinion of the singularly mysterious event which had alarmed himself and so many other persons in the castle on the preceding night? St. Viviers could not have hazarded a more imprudent question, as the persecuted object of his passion experienced a daily increase of aversion for, and dread of himself: and the supernatural disturbances had so forcibly revived all her afflicting suspi-

cions of the treachery which she feared had been employed against the life of her beloved and ever-lamented Henry, that she could not look upon the Marquis without feeling the utmost detestation and horror, as she considered him but too well acquainted with the dreadful act, which she so fearfully surmised had been perpetrated by his agents.

With downcast eyes, and faltering voice, she declined giving any opinion on the subject of the nocturnal alarms, and was again rising to withdraw, when the Marquis, hastily seizing her hand, said—"Did not your looks and manner but too truly imply the guilty fear of detection, unkind, ungenerous Adelaide, my suspicions might have been lulled in dangerous security; but know, thou inexperienced, simple dissembler, that I am acquainted with your having contrived the futile and contemptible tricks which you have bribed some of my deluded domestics to practise. — Confess, therefore, lovely and enchanting girl—

confess

confess the folly of this little artifice, and the mistaken beings, who have so rashly engaged in this affair, shall be assured of my pardon."

For some minutes astonishment had rendered Adelaide mute and immoveable; but ere the Marquis had concluded his singular speech, she darted on him a look of contempt and abhorrence, which fully expressed her scorn of his accusation, and her hatred of himself. The crimson flush of anger and mortification now dyed the cheeks of St. Viviers; the glance of Adelaide had spoken volumes to his soul.—Again he grasped her hand, which she now vainly attempted to withdraw, while, in a voice of mingled rage and love, he said—"And you deny—deny with every indication of scorn, this charge—well, be it so—I will believe you innocent;—but I will not suffer you to suppose that my accusation proceeded from caprice, or my own suspicions.—Know, then——"

"Release me," cried Adelaide, struggling

to

to disengage her hand, "release me, or I will not attend to aught you say."

The Marquis obeyed; and now walked hastily up and down the room, while Adelaide, exhausted by the violence of her emotions, sunk on a chair.

After a pause of a few minutes, he threw himself into a seat near her, and said—

"Listen, I entreat, while I relate to you the circumstance which has inclined me to suppose you to be the author of the imposition practised last night."

"Was *I* here to influence or bribe your domestics, my Lord, three weeks back, when, during my absence, the castle was almost a continued scene of alarm and fear?" demanded Adelaide, while her looks again evinced contempt and displeasure.

"Have I not declared, Mademoiselle, that I am at present inclined to believe you innocent of last night's affair?—Will you not indulge me with a patient hearing of what I mean to say?—That I have not attached any credit to the idea of supernatural agency,

agency, I once informed your friend, Mademoiselle Vernor, on the morning after I had really been much alarmed and disconcerted by the appearance of a figure, resembling the unfortunate Durancy, at the foot of my bed. That mysterious form, I immediately afterwards discovered, was no other than the disguised Count St. Croix." —The paleness of death overspread the face of Adelaide as the Marquis pronounced that much-loved name. He well perceived her deep emotion, but felt too much mortified to notice it; and therefore continued —"I need not, I believe, say that my incredulity respecting supernatural agency was confirmed, by the detection of the gross deception used by your lover, whose discovery of the remains of the unfortunate Garcio effectually placed a bar to your union; and his daring and rash injustice, in accusing *me* as the perpetrator of *that* deed, was awfully punished by the horror he felt on learning that your father's hand had been stained in the blood of that

miserable victim. Anxious for your peace, I made St. Croix swear a most solemn oath, that he would not reveal to you the crime of the Count de Monterci, of whose real name and rank, together with my intention of reclaiming your rights, I acquainted him. This knowledge, however, did not conduce to his plans—your union was interrupted, but not by me; and I here avow, that did the Count still live, I should acknowledge his claim superior to any which my ardent love could give me to your affections.—But he is no more—you are totally unprotected; and why, oh, lovely, adorable Adelaide——" Here the Marquis bent his knee to the amiable afflicted girl, who now, with dignified reserve, interrupted him, by requesting that he would instantly proceed to inform her how he had been led to suppose she had had any share in the mysterious transaction of the last night?

The Marquis resumed his seat; but he rather haughtily said—"The hour is fast approaching,

approaching, Mademoiselle de Monterci, when you will no longer behold me sighing at your feet, to sue for that consideration and return, which, you will soon find, I am empowered to demand as a right."

An involuntary emotion of terror again chased the hectic glow of excessive agitation from the cheek of Adelaide.—" Be not alarmed, beautiful Adelaide," added the Marquis, observing her changing countenance; " you may assure yourself that your *cruelty* alone can make me otherwise than the most tender and respectful of lovers.—But I distress you;—for your sake, I will not now speak on the subject nearest my soul, but hasten to explain and apologize for whatever may have been unpleasing in my precipitate accusation.—You have already heard my guests describe their terror on hearing the great bell of the castle toll, and the noises which followed. My apartment is situated in the southern wing—I also heard the bell—I started from my pillow in amaze—a lighted lamp burned

over

over the chimney-piece—and I thought I heard a faint rustling near the fire-place; —I undrew my curtains, and, to my utter astonishment and momentary dismay, beheld a female figure standing within a few paces of my bed.—Conceive my dismay, on recognizing the perfect features of my deceased wife!—The only difference was, the pale, fallen cheek of death—that contraction of the features, and fixed ghastliness, which sometimes immediately follows dissolution. Her eyes were also fixed, but they had in them a dreadful expression; and, ere I could recover from the consternation which seized me in the first moments of surprise and horror, a hollow sepulchral voice said—'The hour of your union with Adelaide de Monterci will be the hour of your death.'—Three times the spectral figure repeated that sentence—the figure then receded;—the light grew dim—fluttered—expired—and I instantly threw myself from the bed, and summoned my valet from the anti-room. He flew to me with another

another lamp, and I made a most diligent search for any concealed outlet from my chamber, but I found none. Had not the figure denounced the hour of my union with you the hour of my death, I should not have suspected imposition; but that circumstance was sufficient to fill me with the most doubtful conjectures; and, at length, reflecting that your prejudices and imprudent surmises had rendered you averse to my wishes, I was led to conclude the whole a well-executed artifice, and but too rashly imagined that you had fascinated some of my domestics by your irresistible entreaties, and that they had executed a little plan of your devising, to fright me from my happiness."

"Happiness!" repeated Adelaide, with shuddering horror, while she raised her lovely eyes to Heaven; then, turning towards the Marquis, said—"For your own sake, my Lord, as well as mine, I solemnly assure you that I am entirely innocent of every intention or wish to deceive you—

nor

nor do my ideas of the awful visitation you have received, at all coincide with your's. The mysteries of creation are above my comprehension; I cannot, therefore, enter into any argument to prove the nature of the vision you beheld. I know that *I* witnessed a scene of supernatural terror in this castle, which has left an indelible impression of the *possibility* of such appearances on my mind; and if you will but reflect on the utter impossibility of any person in this castle assuming the *countenance* and *voice* of the late Marchioness, you must unavoidably confess there is a mystery attending what you have seen, which our finite minds cannot fathom. How far the prediction of the awful being relative to yourself may yet be fulfilled, I cannot decide; but learn, Marquis St. Viviers, that if there was a possibility of our ever being united, that *I* could not survive the ceremony an hour, for horror and grief would instantly burst my heart. —Be just—be generous, then, and suffer me

me to seek in a convent that holy peace which can alone be obtained in pious seclusion."

"We will reserve this subject for future discussion, Mademoiselle," said the Marquis; "in the mean time I shall commence the most rigorous scrutiny into this singular affair; for that it is not a trick, I cannot be persuaded. The dupe of priests and bigots may tamely submit to such illusions, but it becomes a reasonable being to search, with unwearied zeal, for the exposure and punishment of imposition."

Adelaide was no bigot; she could not, therefore, condemn the Marquis's intentions of penetrating these mysteries; yet she trembled with the anticipation that he would soon obtain a full conviction, that no *earthly* being had assumed the likeness of the late Marchioness. The sorrowing girl did not, however, reply to his declaration, but once more rose to retire; and the Marquis no longer opposed her withdrawing. As she ascended the grand staircase,

her

her eyes involuntarily turned towards the east gallery. The large Gothic folding doors were open, and the bright sun-beams, illuming the lengthened space, took from it all appearance of peculiar solitude or desolation. This gallery was the scene of the last night's mysterious events—Adelaide paused. She felt an earnest desire to enter the gallery, and she hesitated not long ere she obeyed the impulse, which inclined her to proceed thither. She traversed this place for some time, without perceiving any thing which could lead her to imagine that it could have been the spot in which imposition would have chosen to display its illusions. The gallery was very long, but not wide. A range of painted glass windows run along one side, and looked into the exterior court of the castle; and on the other, the wall was hung with ancient family portraits, and various coats of arms suspended over them. The massy frames of the pictures resisted all her efforts to move them; nor could she, during the most accurate

curate research, discover any secret spring by which they could be displaced; on the contrary, they seemed fastened against the wall at each corner; and the end of the gallery, instead of being occupied by large doors communicating with the other wings of the building, displayed a wide fire-place, over which hung an historical painting from one of the Crusades, in which one of the ancestors of the Marquis had highly distinguished himself.

Thoughtfully revolving the occurrences which perplexed her, Adelaide was on the point of retiring from the gallery, when she beheld Father Bertrand slowly entering; his eyes were bent downwards, and he seemed to number his beads with more than usual devotion.

On perceiving him, Adelaide involuntarily made a pause, but as he advanced along the gallery, he raised his eyes, and saw her. He started, and exclaimed—"Is it possible that *you* have courage to venture here alone?"

"I am

"I am not *alone*, father," she replied, directing the eyes of the friar to the dog, who was almost always by her side; and, having met his mistress on the stairs, had followed her into the gallery.

"The confidence you place in the protection of that animal is sinful," said Father Bertrand; "you would have done well, unhappy child, to have confided in me, and met me on the night prior to your leaving the castle; you would now have been in safety, and would have avoided all the horrors which must soon overwhelm you *here*."

The look of compassion which marked the harsh features of the friar, and the seeming sorrow with which he spoke, produced in the mind of Adelaide an irresistible wish of being able not to suspect him of having been the vile agent employed by the Marquis in destroying her lover: and as the idea that *appearances* alone should not possess sufficient force to make us condemn others unheard, flashed

on her recollection, she instantaneously resolved to give the monk a hint of her dreadful suspicions, and thus enable him to vindicate himself.

In consequence of this determination, she, after a short pause, raised her beautiful and expressive eyes, and earnestly regarding the friar, said, "Father, by the reverence I bear your holy profession, I conjure you, as you value your repose hereafter, to acquaint me whether you know aught of the fate of the Count St. Croix?"

The friar started, and threw on her a glance of surprise and scrutiny, and after a moment's silence, said, "Do you, lady, know aught of the fate of your lover?"

"My suspicions almost amount to dreadful certainty," replied Adelaide, in a faltering voice.

Again the monk looked at her with mingled wonder and earnestness—"Be warned," he said, with impressive severity of manner, "for your own sake be warned, and

breathe not to the Marquis the remotest hint of your suspicion—you cannot undo what has been done,—but you may raise a spirit of revenge, which will reach even yourself."

This terrible confirmation of her worst fears almost overpowered the senses of the unfortunate Adelaide—she was sinking lifeless to the floor, when the monk, catching her in his aged arms, softly cried, "Revive, amiable, unhappy child, all may yet end well—there is a power which will not suffer you long to remain the victim of oppression."

Adelaide reopened her eyes, but had nearly fainted on finding herself supported by the monk.

"Oh! leave me, leave me!" she exclaimed, wildly struggling to free herself from his hold, "leave me, nor let me be sustained by those hands which are crimsoned with the blood of my Henry!"

The monk had released her—he started back in dismay as her accusing words reverberated

berated through the long gallery, while in a deep and hollow tone he said—"Mistaken Adelaide! have you dared to suspect me of so foul a deed?"

"Were not the horrible proofs of your guilt concealed in the uninhabited chambers—the blood-stained robe of your order—the picture torn from the bosom of my beloved—and the murderous poniard? —Was not my St. Croix assassinated?— and did you not confess, on the day that I first beheld you, your having recently quitted the town, where, at the period of your being there, he must have been?— Oh! are you not the private friend, the confidential director of the man who has usurped over me a power which tends to my destruction?"

The mild severity of the friar's fixed look, which, as she spoke, was rivetted on her face, involuntarily abashed Adelaide, but her confusion was infinitely increased, when, on her ceasing, he said—"I am innocent of the crime which you so unjustly

impute to me, young lady; and the hour may arrive, in which the recollection of your injustice may cover you with confusion and remorse.—Know, that I can explain to your perfect satisfaction those trivial, but mysterious appearances, on which you so rashly have condemned me."

He paused a moment ere he added—"But this temerity, this cruelty, in harbouring such vile and sinful suspicions, demand an expiation—dare you meet me in the western gallery at twelve this night?—You have presumptuously ventured to load with the most horrible surmises the sacred character of a man like me, and dare you want courage to atone for your error—an error which I am willing to impute to your youth, and peculiar situation?—Meet me, I conjure you, Adelaide," continued the father in a softened tone; "you have nothing to fear from me, but much—much to hope.—Arm yourself with courage, therefore, and promise to meet me, that I may have an opportunity of vindicating myself,

myself, and of revealing to you a secret which will enable you to exert yourself against the arts and villainies of your oppressor, who, in less than ten days, means to compel you to become his wife!—Nay, start not, 'tis most true—I would save you—oh! do not be so much your own enemy as to discredit my words, or refuse to meet me—surely my promise that you shall be safe, sealed on this holy cross, must convince you that I cherish no sinister designs."

The monk raised the cross suspended round his neck, and pressed it to his lips.

"I will meet you, Father," said Adelaide, starting from the fixed attitude of attentive amazement in which she had stood—"I will meet you."

"You must come alone."

"The dog."

"It must not accompany you; our lives might be the forfeit of detection."

Adelaide trembled at the idea of meeting Father Bertrand without her faithful guard;

but her word was given, and could not be recalled.

"I will come alone then," she said.

"You will find no cause to regret your confidence in me," said the friar, with animation; "at twelve, remember."

"But should I encounter some sight of horror—some form supernatural and dreadful, Father," suddenly said Adelaide, all the terrors of the last night recurring to her recollection.

"You have done no evil," replied Bertrand, with serious severity; "think none, and distrust not the care of Heaven; 'tis the murderer and oppressor only that need tremble at the mysterious horrors which mark the midnight hour here.—This night am I to investigate this strange and awful business, of which I have but just heard; but that duty shall not deter me from serving you." He hesitated a moment, and then said, "But I had almost forgotten this affair—can you meet me at eleven?"

"The

"The inhabitants of the castle will not have retired to rest."

"They will not approach this wing of the castle to-night; apartments are preparing on the other side of the edifice for the terrified visitors—no interruption can be feared; and as I must return to my convent to procure one of my brethren to pass the night with me in this gallery, I shall not be missed—be punctual to eleven—farewell!"

The monk now suddenly glided out of the room, and Adelaide hastened to her own apartments, to shut herself up, and reflect on the promise she had been so strangely induced to make.

CHAP. X.

IN vain did Adelaide endeavour to fix her reflections on any one point, her mind was so bewildered between her interview with the Marquis and her more recent conversation with the Father Bertrand. The account of the death of Don Alvarez de Suza—the strange events of the night—her own embarrassing and fearful situation—but, above all, the friar's solemn denial of his having been engaged in any plan against the life of her lover—his singular request of seeing her in private that night, and unavailing conjectures as to the nature of the secret he had promised to reveal—

all

all these subjects alternately recurred to her thoughts; but the more intently she dwelt on them, the more confused and perplexed she became, and was at length compelled to desist from her efforts to develope mysteries, which seemed, the more she scrutinized them, the more to baffle all her penetration.

She confined herself to her apartments during the remainder of the day, an act by no means difficult, as she frequently, under a just plea of indisposition, did so, and was effectually prevented from thinking too deeply on her cares and perplexities by the unceasing talking of Marcella, who repeated a thousand exaggerated accounts of the alarm which had occurred in the night.

As soon as the castle clock struck ten, Adelaide retired to her chamber, and Marcella to her couch in the closet; while Cæsar took his usual station in the anti-room.

The clock soon chimed the half hour—

Adelaide was kneeling at her devotions, and fervently praying for courage to keep her appointment, and for the protection of Heaven in the execution of her project —the last quarter chimed—she arose, and looked around for her veil to throw on ere she quitted her room. She walked towards the window—the night was calm and lovely—the moonbeams shone brightly on the summits of the Alps, and the fragrant perfume of flowers and herbs scented the warm air—she turned her eyes to the pointed cliffs of the Savoy Alps; the snowy heights, and the dark recesses of the mountains, formed a striking contrast to the peaceful hollows at their feet, through which the Isere, resplendant sparkling in the moonlight, flowed along.—The point of view from her window resembled one scene from the southern wing of the Chateau de Arrancy, that happy home, where no cruel anticipation of the troubles which awaited her, had embittered the now lamented hours of love and peace which had smiled upon

upon her early years.—Images of never to be repeated joys now quickly arose, arrayed in all the fairy tints, which memory gives to the recollection of scenes dear to the heart. The shades of her parents and St. Croix were present to her mind, and seemed to smile upon her with all their wonted tender love and fondness—but, ah! these enchanting pictures were succeeded by agonizing remembrance, that all these beings so sacredly beloved were no more; and scenes of murder and horror arose to her affrighted soul, and chased away the soothing visions of happiness from her enanguished heart.—The tears with which love and regret had bedewed her cheeks ceased to flow, as the chilling conviction of her misery pressed upon her mind, and the gloom of despondence, mingled with a faint superstitious dread, seized her faculties.

The clock struck eleven—she started from her torpid reverie, threw on her veil, and, with a momentary sensation of despe-

rate carelessness, took the lamp she had prepared, and hastily walked into the antichamber—she opened the door, and looked out into the passage—her fears revived—all was dark and silent—an aspiration trembled on her lips, and an icy chill crept over her pale cheeks.—The time would not admit of delay, yet fain would she have returned. The gleaming light of her lamp shone faintly down the passage—she ventured a few steps onward, but had nearly fallen lifeless with terror, for she discerned a tall, dark figure enter the passage from the corridor.—Her eyes were rivetted on the object—she recognized the Father Bertrand—she revived—How frail and inconsistent are we in the moment of dreaded danger!—her fears made her now regard the man as a protector, whom in the morning she had viewed as an assassin.

The monk placed his finger on his lips in token of silence. He took her cold, trembling hand, and led her onwards; this reminded her of the night on which she had

had stolen, under the guidance of Father Baptista, from the chateau of Madame de Beauvais.—She trembled, lest disappointment and danger awaited her present act; for she secretly indulged a faint hope that the monk would lead her beyond the castle's walls. They passed along the northern side of the corridor in silence, and entered on a short passage leading to the western gallery—they came into the gallery.—Adelaide made a pause, but the monk, in a hollow whisper, said—"Danger may surprise us here—you must come farther." His voice sounded mournful and truth-like —the alarmed Adelaide hesitated — she looked in his face—the glare of the lamp shewed it pale and ghastly, and marked with deep emotion.

He returned her look with a glance of angry surprise, for in her lovely features he read doubt and terror. He spoke not, but seizing her hand, led her forcibly onwards—she had not power to resist. They reached the large picture of the martyrdom

of St. Stephen—he let go her hand, and she reclined, almost fainting, against the dark wainscot. — He touched a secret spring, and the picture seemed to recede into the wall. Again he grasped her death-cold hand—she raised to him a beseeching look.—He encircled her in his thin, boney arm, and dragged her through the aperture, and up a narrow flight of stone steps. —He placed her on the last step—here she rested a moment.—As he again approached, he made a menacing signal to her to be silent—she was incapable of disobeying him.—He supported her across a little narrow passage, and up another flight of stairs, into a small closet, so low that they were obliged to stoop in passing through. The monk opened a small strong door—a burst of air blew on the fragile form of Adelaide —the moon shone mildly on her blue eyes, and fear-blanched cheek—the stars of Heaven glittered serenely, and the night breeze wafted around the fragrant odours from the vale.

" Whither

"Whither are you leading me, father?" softly asked the trembling maid, and she saw that they were entering on the turret-crowned battlements of the castle.

The monk did not answer—he pressed her hand convulsively, and still he led her onwards.

They approached a turret—the monk tapped lightly against a low small door—he drew back the time-rusted bolt—the door cracked on its hinges—it opened—he pressed the hand of Adelaide faster—he drew her almost senseless into a small room. A voice, which seemed to her like the voice of an angel, sounded in her ears—a feeble shriek burst from her lips—she fell on the rush-strewn floor—she revived in the arms of St. Croix! She started up a little—he uttered a cry—again she leaned over her lover—"Ah! it is, it is my beloved," she exclaimed, and Chastity herself might have owned the tenderness of that purity and love with which she returned the feeble embrace of her Henry. His

joy

joy had almost stolen his senses—his eyes were fixed with rapture on his Adelaide, but his faltering tongue had not power to express the full extacy of his heart.

"He is dying, father, he is dying," cried the lovely girl, wringing her hands in agony.

"Be patient, my amiable child," said the friar; "can you not distinguish the excess of felicity from the oppression of approaching death?"

Bertrand raised the head of the Count—he made him swallow a few drops of cordial, and the young man now gave utterance to his feelings in the fervour with which he murmured, "My Adelaide," as again he encircled her in his arms. She gazed on him with chaste delight, then threw herself at the feet of the friar, and softly whispered—"Pardon my suspicions, father; you have given me life, fortitude, and hope; the consciousness of my injustice will be the severest punishment I could suffer."

The

The friar raised the timid girl—he placed her beside her lover—she drew her chair closer to his rushy mattrass—she bent over him, and now the tear of love fell on his cheek.

"Why are you here, dearest St. Croix?" she fearfully asked.

A loud noise at the door of the turret threw the lovers into consternation, but the more composed friar distinguished the moan of Cæsar—he opened the door, and the dog rushed in.

"I left my room door open," said Adelaide, replying to the half-enquiring, half-reproachful look of the monk.

"And I the pannel," said the friar, in a tone which implied that he condemned himself; "my imprudence is unpardonable—and, hark! the clock chimes the half hour after eleven—say what you wish quickly, but remember, this is not a time for explanation—we must return in another quarter of an hour."

The friar's caution was made in vain—

the lovers repeatedly asked each other—"How have we been *thus* separated? How have we met?"

"I have mourned you as dead, my beloved Henry," murmured Adelaide, "and despair had nearly taken possession of my soul."

"And I," said the Count, "I have been long entombed in this frightful cell, and tortured with the most horrible sense of your griefs, without being cheered with even the shadow of hope."

"But why—why are you here, dearest St. Croix?"

"To force me either to resign my claims to my Adelaide, or in case of persevering refusals, to be for ever deprived of liberty, perhaps of life. But fear not, thou adored of my soul; though now enchained, and a captive, I shall yet be released by that gracious Power who sleeps and slumbers not, and whose mighty hand can in an instant crush the monster that enslaves me thus. I have been dragged hither in secresy,

cresy, I have been treated like a criminal, while at intervals my audacious persecutor, emboldened by the strength of my chains, dares appear before me, and insult my soul with proposals and threats, which equally prove the mean folly and cowardice of his own heart, and do but stimulate me the more to avow just vengeance on himself."

"But it has been reported that you are dead, St. Croix," said the trembling Adelaide, "and after the treatment you have received, certainly the Marquis cannot really mean to restore you to liberty—surely he cannot intend to expose himself to the disgrace of a publication of his crimes!"

"Your conclusions are apparently just, my Adelaide," replied the Count; "but when I acquaint you that the infamous St. Viviers has not only confined me thus, and tortured me with the most maddening propositions, but has also had the insolence to detail to me his whole plans and motives,

you

you will cease to wonder at any singularity in his conduct."

"His plans and motives!" exclaimed Adelaide, "is this possible?"

"Most true.—The villain, when I had been here but three days, came calmly into my prison, and warning me, as I valued *your* life, to cease the imprecations of vengeance which despair and agony forced from my lips, ensured to himself a few moments silent attention, when he thus addressed me: I can repeat his words, for they are imprinted on my brain in characters of fire.

'You are surprised at finding yourself *here*, Count,' said he; 'it is at your own option to depart immediately—that is, if you agree to my propositions; but I will explain my motives for bringing you here, and then, as you will perceive the *necessity* of compliance, you may probably be induced to accede to my desire. I am in possession of a will made by my *supposed* brother,

ther, the Count de Monterci, in which, in case of his sudden demise, he leaves his daughter entirely to my guardianship, and enjoins her to bestow her hand on me alone, provided I can make interest to restore her to her family name and honours. Now you are my only bar to the accomplishment of my wishes.—I do not, however, seek your life, but I must observe, that while you are supposed to live, and persist in your claims to Adelaide's affection and hand, she will never be prevailed upon to fulfil her father's will, but will resign both fame and fortune to be your's. Aware of the impossibility of succeeding in any attempt to persuade you to resign her, I have brought you here, and most successfully has the report of your having been murdered by banditti been propagated. As the affair now stands, Adelaide will believe you dead, and of course there exists a probability of her conforming to my wishes Now the moment she is my wife, you may obtain liberty, provided you will bind yourself,

self, by the most solemn oaths, never to divulge whatever has passed between yourself and me; and I on my part will take care that your name and honour shall not be injured by your absence from the army, as I will furnish you with such admirable proofs of having been *really* the *prisoner* of a party of banditti, that you need fear no trouble on that head. If you refuse my offers, there is no alternative but your remaining my prisoner for life. As to any hope of *escape*, it would be idle to indulge it, for the lives of the men who brought you hither are in my power, and the least breach of their fidelity to me consigns them to an ignominious death, while their honesty secures to them riches and protection. Do you consent to my plans?'

Here St. Croix, the animation of whose present feelings had thus far supported his almost exhausted frame, ceased for a moment, while the wonder-stricken Adelaide had not power to make a single comment on his strange relation.

At

At length he continued—"You are silent, my beloved; your senses are overwhelmed with astonishment at hearing that I could listen to such an address, without being seized with phrenetic fury against the wretch who had thus dared to outrage reason and humanity But I *did* listen—yes, without daring scarce to breathe, I eagerly devoured every sentence which fell from his detested lips; and now, fully aware of his motives and designs, internally vowed, that should he persist in his artful machinations against yourself, that I would doom him to a fate most horrible. When I recovered my speech, I told him so, and with a calmness, which I saw amazed him, assured him that I would die rather than accede to the cowardly and base measures which he intended to pursue to save himself from my vengeance.

"In these resolves I have remained firm; and now I behold thee still safe and free, my beloved, I will brave every danger, in the hope that liberty may crown our exertions.

tions.—Ah! wherefore did you refuse to listen to those entreaties and representations which I urged on the night that I left the castle? then had you done so, we had now been secure from the power of this monster.—Yet, oh! forgive my reproachful tongue, my Adelaide, for was it not thy tender care for my honour that withheld thee?"

Again St. Croix's voice faltered, but the soft accents of his Adelaide, as she trembling said—"Ah! these emotions are more than you can endure, my Henry—forbear," soon recalled his fleeting powers; and when she enquired, "But was de Monterci really the name of my father—and is the boasted power of the Marquis justly legal?"

The Count replied—"Grieve not yourself, my love, by indulging in too deep reflection on a subject which, when I am restored to liberty, will be fully investigated; and be assured that hour cannot be far off, at least, we must cheer our souls with

with this hope.—But why did my Adelaide refuse her confidence to the good Father Bertrand?—had she trusted to him, she had ere now been in safety."

"Ah!" exclaimed Adelaide, turning towards the friar, "is it possible, father, that you would not tell me that my Henry lived?—But, oh! it was my own suspicious soul that kept this knowledge distant, Had I first met you in the western gallery ——."

"You would not have heard aught of the Count," said Bertrand, "for I was at that time ignorant that he was here—my design then was in pity to withdraw you from the castle, and place you in a convent, till you could find friends to free you from the power of the Marquis. How I lately obtained a knowledge of the Count St. Croix's being still in existence, and confined here, you shall now know.

"On the night when I first hoped you would meet me in the western gallery, I repaired there at the hour of twelve, fo

 expecte

expected that the hope of liberty, and my singular manner of addressing you, would have induced you to venture to meet me. All the inhabitants of the castle had retired to bed—the night was dark and stormy—and the wind that rushed along the gallery, almost extinguished my lamp, as, in anxious expectance of your approach, I paced the floor. At length I heard a footstep behind me—I looked round—I thought to behold you, but my eyes beheld a female figure clad in white, and holding in her hand a polished dagger, at the extremity of which burned a faint blue light. Her face was the face of death, and her form and features resembled those of the late Marchioness.—I knew the Marchioness was no more—my horror was such, that I had scarcely power to command the spirit, in the name of the most Holy, to say, why it had visited me?

'Murder! murder! murder!' it slowly and deeply murmured three times, and fainting with the flaming poniard to the concealed

concealed passage, moved towards it, and beckoned me to follow. Irresistibly impelled, I followed it, and was led up to the battlements, and to this turret. Here the figure paused—pointed to the door, and slowly receding, vanished from my view. I had no light with me, my lamp having fallen, and been extinguished on my first beholding the spirit; but doubting not that I was to be the instrument of discovering some foul deed, I tried to open the door; the harsh grating bolts yielded, and I entered; when, by the pale light of a glimmering lamp suspended from the cieling, I beheld the Count St. Croix; I had never seen him above twice, but his name and story soon interested every feeling of my soul, and——."

Here the monk was interrupted by the chiming of the clock. "There," he cried, "all depends on our not being detected—you must accompany me, lady—two nights hence, and you shall again visit the Count."

"Two nights hence!" repeated both the lovers in a tone of agony, as they gazed on each other But, alas! they were compelled to yield to the cruel necessity of their situation; a thousand tender expressions unuttered hovered on their lips—they could not say adieu. The monk gently tore Adelaide from the enfolding arms of her lover, who in vain entreated and lamented, and tore her almost fainting, from the turret to the door of her own apartment. She pressed the hand of the father, and, preceded by her faithful Cæsar, tottered into the anti-room, and from thence stole into her chamber, as if fearful that the echoes of her feet should betray her knowledge of the secret of her lover's existence.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

BUT Adelaide retired not to seek repose—scarce had she closed the door of the room, than, falling on her knees, she attempted to give utterance to the fervent gratitude which now raised her soul to Heaven; words were inadequate to express the feelings of her heart—the tears of joy that fell from her uplifted eyes—the fervor with which she clasped her hands, as the mental prayer of thanksgiving swelled her bosom, alone evinced the excess of her pious gratitude to the beneficent Power that had once more restored to her her beloved St. Croix. She forgot that both her-

self and her lover were still in the power of the Marquis—she remembered only that Heaven had graciously permitted them to meet again, and she no longer doubted the protection of that glorious Being who watches over the innocent and oppressed; she hoped every thing, and a calm slumber soon stole over her senses, when with a mind soothed, and elevated by devotion, she laid her head upon her pillow.

In the morning she awoke refreshed; the happy events of the preceding night rushed on her memory; she could scarce persuade herself that they had not been illusion—soon the delightful conviction of her happiness was stamped upon her heart; but, ah! it was now mingled by the forebodings of fear, and, freed from the enthusiastic transport which had supported hope, she became sensible of the weakness and instability of human nature, by the anticipation of sorrow, which involuntarily she now experienced. But these agitative thoughts at length yielded, as she again addressed

addressed the Deity, the calm of pious confidence returned, and she began to reflect on the surprising situation in which she had beheld her lover, and to consider what means must be employed in freeing themselves from the power of the Marquis. But this was a subject which could not fail of involving her in renewed perplexity; and as she was still unacquainted with some of the circumstances which had attended his being confined in the turret, she was at length compelled to resolve on avoiding all idle and improbable conjectures, till she should again see Father Bertrand whom she doubted not to meet in the breakfast-parlour, as he had passed the night in the castle.

As her thoughts turned on the manner in which the father had been engaged during the night, an internal awe and solemnity pervaded her mind. He had said that a supernatural being, which resembled the late Marchioness, had conducted himself

to the turret where her lover was imprisoned.

The mysterious form which had stood beside the bed of the Marquis, had, according to his own account, worn the form and features of his lady, and it was generally reported, that it was in reality the unquiet spirit of the Marchioness which disturbed and haunted the castle. The Marquis's idea of imposition was effectually banished from the mind of Adelaide by the relation of Father Bertrand; for allowing that the Marquis could have been deceived, she could not believe there existed any probability that any one would hazard an attempt of imposing on the monk, whose character for piety and courage was so firmly established, that it seemed highly erroneous to imagine that an impostor would venture to encounter all the dangers which attend detection, by such a man as the Father Bertrand was known to be.

The reflections of Adelaide were, however,

ever, soon interrupted by a summons to breakfast. She immediately descended to the breakfast-room, where she found the Marquis and his guests assembled, but, to her extreme disappointment, Father Bertrand was not present. Conscious of the danger of enquiring for the monk, she silently bowed to the compliments of the company, and took her seat by Madame de Beauvais, who began, in a strain of exulting raillery, to boast that the spirits which had troubled the castle were at last vanished, as they had not dared to make their appearance, when Father Bertrand and another friar had passed the night in the east gallery, where they intended to keep watch every second night, while in the intervals such plans were to be put into execution for the discovery of the impostor that had so daringly disturbed the inhabitants of the castle, that there could be few apprehensions entertained of their escaping detection.

The Marquis, however, appeared melancholy

lancholy and thoughtful, while the heaviness of his eyes, and the languor of his looks, seemed to indicate want of repose. Ever pained and confused by his rivetted gaze at herself, Adelaide now could not endure the earnest penetrating manner in which he regarded her; and although she could not still consider him as the *murderer* of her beloved Henry, yet the alarming idea that he suspected her having discovered that her lover still lived, caused the pale hue of terror to overspread her cheek, and banish thence the pale rose of hope, that just before had given animation to her eyes. During breakfast he hardly spoke three words, and the moment the meal was ended, he withdrew, while the company separated to amuse themselves as they liked till dinner; and Adelaide returned to her apartment, in the expectation of learning from the loquacity of Marcella when she might hope to see again the Father Bertrand.

She was not disappointed, for she had scarcely

scarcely been ten minutes in her apartment, when Marcella, with a countenance which indicated that she had heard something wonderful, came into the chamber.

"Has any thing particular occurred, Marcella?" said Adelaide, her impatience not allowing her to wait the commencement of Marcella's relation.

"Nothing public, Mademoiselle, nothing that may be openly talked of has happened," replied the old woman, with an air of importance—"but it seems that, although the ghosts did not dare to meet the holy friars in the east gallery, that they were not so fearful with the Marquis, who, it seems, passed a most terrible night with them. But this is a great secret, Mademoiselle; and if Monsieur Pierre, my Lord's favourite valet-de-chambre, was to know that I ever repeated a word of what he has told me, I do believe that I should never hear another syllable from him again; but then he knows my prudence, and that he may depend that I shall never repeat what he said; it would

be a fine thing indeed, if a person of my years could not keep a secret. Do you know, Mademoiselle, that Jerome has just told me, that about twelve o'clock last night———."

"You forget that you are about to betray your secret, Marcella," said Adelaide, interrupting her—but Marcella was not to be so easily warned; she looked foolish, undoubtedly, and stammered a little; but she found so many reasons why she ought not to conceal any thing from her dear, pious, good, young lady, who, she was certain, would not repeat a word of it, that Adelaide perceived that it would be an unavailing effort to attempt to silence her, and of course Marcella continued to speak.

"It was just after twelve o'clock last night, Mademoiselle, that Pierre, hearing a deep groan in the Marquis's room—Pierre sleeps in the anti-room—it was just after twelve o'clock, that hearing this dismal groan, Pierre flew into his lord's apartment,

ment, and found him lying half out of the bed, and almost lifeless. The poor fellow raised his master's head, and tried to rouze him a little, but the Marquis stared at him in such a ghastly way, that he had almost let him fall. But at last he recovered a little, and though he seemed half choaked with fright, desired Pierre to take away the horrible dagger that hung by a hair right over his head. Poor Pierre looked up—frightened enough was he to be sure, now—but not the sight of a dagger could Pierre see, and he said there was none there. The Marquis did not seem to have courage to look up for it himself, but he swore that there was a small fiery dagger just ready to drop on his heart.—Well, Pierre again looked up, but saw nothing but the gold tassels which hung down between the curtains of the high canopy. At last, Mademoiselle, when Pierre insisted that he could not see any thing, the Marquis ventured to look up, and to his great joy there was no dagger to be seen. So now

now he came to himself, and springing out of bed, rung the bell for another servant, who was sent to call up M. Andre, who is very courageous; and the Marquis sent for wine, and made M. Andre and Pierre sit up with him all night; and then they searched all the room, to see if there was any secret entrance that any one could have come in at, and played them any trick, but none could be found. And now, Mademoiselle, the Marquis has ordered another room to be got ready for himself to sleep in, and he promised Andre and Pierre I don't know what all, not to speak of the affair, lest it should frighten you, my lady; and, to be sure, Andre will keep it close enough, but Pierre is so struck to the heart by all that he has of late seen and heard in the castle, that he could not help telling me; and I believe he would not be sorry if he knew that I had told you, Mademoiselle, for he said, that nothing now gave him such sorrow as to think what would become of that beautiful, good, young

young lady, whom his lord is going to force to marry him."

Adelaide was now so accustomed to listen to marvellous and mysterious relations, that they had almost lost the power of inspiring her with the excess of horror and astonishment which they had at first excited; but, certainly, she could not hear this account without feeling considerable awe, and no small degree of alarm; nor did the conclusion of Marcella's speech fail to affect her deeply, as she had but too much cause to fear that a man stained with crimes, such as she judged and knew the Marquis to have been guilty of, would not hesitate in exerting all his power over herself; and her situation appeared to her in the more terrific and singular point of view, as the feudal age of oppression was long past; yet, at an enlightened period, she found that art and power had still so many resources to screen villainy, and so many means to perpetrate the basest acts, that she felt overwhelmed with the anticipation of

ruin, although she could hardly believe that the circumstances of her own defenceless state, and the situation of her lover, was not all illusion.—Alas! she but too soon was forced to acknowledge, that virtue and innocence, however they may support the empire of conscious integrity in noble minds suffering oppression, are in themselves powerless, when opposed to depraved and confirmed villainy, unless shielded and saved by the Omnipotent.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

TREMBLING for the fate of St. Croix, and filled with the most alarming fears, Adelaide descended to dinner — what was her joy on meeting near the foot of the grand staircase, Father Bertrand. No other human being but themselves was in view. The father waited not to be questioned by the anxious Adelaide—he whispered—"Venture not near the turret without me, as you value the life of your lover, or your own honour. To-morrow night I will be with you at eleven—this night I pass with the Marquis—wretched man!—he will not learn the value of a peaceful

peaceful conscience till he is plunged beyond recall into the abyss of guilt, on the brink of which he now totters."

One of the domestics then crossing the hall, the father had only time to say—"Remember, go not to the turret." Then quitted Adelaide, and preceded her with hasty steps to the dining-room.

At table, during the desert, nothing was spoken of but the disappearance of the ghosts; and as the presence of the Father Bertrand was conceived to have effected this speedy deliverance from terror, he was treated with the utmost homage and reverence. In the course of the conversation, Madame Villette remarked on the singularity of Adelaide never having been alarmed by the late nocturnal disturbances, and this was attributed to the circumstance of her having Cæsar so near her, as doubtless the impostor had more cunning than to approach an apartment where so sagacious and formidable a guard was stationed.

Adelaide said that she could not attempt to

to decide on the nature of the late mysterious occurrences; but, certainly she must acknowledge that Cæsar had not been able to protect her from being much terrified by an appearance, which she had conceived to be a supernatural light, which she had once beheld in one of the apartments of the castle.

All, except the Marquis and Father Bertrand, eagerly asked — "Which apartment?" for each feared that it might be the one they occupied.

"In the last of the suite of uninhabited chambers in the north wing," replied Adelaide—the Marquis gazed on her attentively—"One night after twelve," she continued, "I beheld a faint blue light glide along the chamber, and suddenly vanish, and the half-suppressed, fearful whine of the dog gave me a conviction of its being supernatural."

The paleness of the Marquis increased; he leaned back in his chair, and turned his eyes with a look of mingled astonishment and

and enquiry on Father Bertrand, who, comprehending his meaning, said—"Incredulity is in some cases a crime, my Lord; that which is beyond our comprehension is not impossible."

These words of the friar revived all the fears of the company; and even Madame de Beauvais declared, that should there be a repetition of the terrors which had already so much embittered their stay in the castle, she must speedily terminate her visit.

The Marquis looked at her rather reproachfully, but he did not now, as formerly, attempt to prove that the late causes of alarm were the effects of imposition.

Soon after the desert was removed, cards were proposed; and now Father Bertrand arose to depart, and Adelaide to return to her own chamber, while the Marquis and his friends retired to another apartment, to divert their disagreeable thoughts with play.

As Adelaide never joined their supper-

parties,

parties, where a species of mirth by no means congenial to her delicate mind had usually prevailed, previous to the midnight disturbances, she was now at liberty to remain in her room for the remainder of the day, which she passed in all the restless anxiety and solicitude of love and fear; for she did not dare to hazard the safety of her lover by disobeying the commands of Father Bertrand.

When Marcella had retired to her couch, Adelaide sat down to write a long letter to the Abbess of Santa Catherina, near Bayonne. It is true, she had not as yet received any reply to the last packet she had sent off, but she was in daily expectation of one; and she now wrote her venerable friend an account of the restoration of her lover, and promised a fuller detail in a few days. Thus occupied, she beheld the morning dawn ere she retired to bed, and sunk into slumbers, in which fancy presented scenes of coming happiness.—Ah! how reluctant did she rise from the pleasing

sing visions of the night to the sad certainty of real trouble; for scarcely was she dressed, when a message from the Marquis summoned her to meet him in the western hall—that hall which he had ornamented and prepared for the fetes he had intended to give previous to the death of his lady.

Slowly, and with palpitating heart, she proceeded thither, and, to her great surprise, found that this wide and lofty hall was now much more splendidly furnished and decorated than it had been when she last entered it. The Marquis met her at the massy folding-doors—he would have taken her hand—she rejected his attention, and walking into the hall, requested to learn why he had desired to see her?

"To introduce you to the scene of your bridal festivities—to court your approbation of the arrangements which I have made for the celebration of our nuptials, enchanting Adelaide."

Prepared as Adelaide had been for this declaration of the Marquis's resolve to hasten

ten this event, she could scarce support herself under the shock of hearing him avow his design—the sickly chill of extreme terror oppressed her heart, and marked her lovely countenance with the pale hue of death. She tottered, and leaned against one of the massy clustered pillars of the hall, and had nearly fainted—the officious solicitude of the Marquis recalled her to recollection, and instantly convinced of the folly of suffering him to imagine that she was incapable of exerting a proper degree of resistance to his intentions, she made an effort to assume an air of firmness and resolution, and said—"I have never concealed from the Marquis St. Viviers my fixed determination never to be his wife—the idea alone freezes me with horror!—Had I not even been accustomed to consider you, my Lord, as a near relative, I should still have felt invincibly reluctant to accept your hand; but circumstanced as we have been, I feel myself more than ever averse to such an union, and therefore

fore claim your promise of permitting me to retire into a convent, for no power on earth can ever alter my resolution never to become your's."

While Adelaide, with considerable emotion, thus declared her determination, the Marquis appeared confused and agitated. He did not, however, yield to the impulses of the vexation and anger which filled his mind, but regarding her with a look in which passion and admiration were predominant, replied—" Your cruel declaration, Mademoiselle de Monterci, fills me with concern and mortification. I am grieved and distracted at not being so fortunate as to be able to overcome your prejudices; but I am not so weak, nor so despicable, as to endure your contempt with patience; and as my respectful, ardent love can make no impression on your heart, you must expect that on finding all my anxious tenderness unavailing, I must have recourse to other means to ensure your acquiescence."

Adelaide turned pale at this ungenerous threat—

threat—the Marquis perceived her emotion, with secret triumph, but too artful to appear to do so; he threw himself at her feet, and continued—"Charming Adelaide, mistress of my soul; oh! do not, do not compel me to deviate from that sacred respect and adoration which my heart inclines me to offer you. Consider my situation—urged by love, and the flattering hope of ensuring your gratitude, when I knelt to our gracious monarch, to plead for the pardon of your house and the restoration of your honours and estates, I ventured also to demand your hand—I ventured to say that you would be mine, and in less than a month I am to present you to the King as my bride, who deigns in that character to receive your grateful homage for his clemency."

"And does the Marquis St. Viviers imagine that I must sacrifice my happiness, to shield him from the indignation of his royal master?—No, my Lord; had honour or generosity dwelt in your bosom, you

would have reverenced truth, and awaited the moment when you could in reality have ascertained whether my expected gratitude would have been demonstrated in such an approbation of your suit as you so unjustly and falsely boasted to possess.—Importune me, therefore, no more, lest I fully express how much I doubt the tale you have told me of my new rank and name."

"Doubt! Is it possible that you can doubt it?" cried the Marquis, starting up.

"Is there any thing so astonishing in my incredulity, my Lord, when you have just manifested to me that you hold neither truth nor virtue sacred?"

"This is too much!" exclaimed the Marquis, walking up and down the hall in extreme agitation. "Beware, Adelaide! if I cannot obtain either your love or your esteem, I shall no longer consider myself under any obligation to suffer the hourly torment which your scorn inflicts, when I possess the power of being happy. And know,

:now, proud maid, that either by submis-ion or force, you shall meet me at the al-ar three nights hence—yes, I swear——" ınd here he pronounced a most awful oath —" I will no longer remain the dupe of my own heart and your prejudices—you *shall* be mine; and if my tender affection fails to obtain your pardon for the act to which your cruelty compels me, I shall at least avoid being the object of your ridi-cule, for the pusillanimous weakness of fearing to be happy."

Indignant and offended delicacy pre-vented Adelaide from betraying any new terrors at the menaces of the Marquis. She replied not, but walked towards the door, and was silently departing, when the Marquis quickly followed her, and, catch-ing her hand, said, in a low and agitated voice—" I will not ask you to return, Ade-laide—I will not *now* entreat your pardon, for I shall devote every hour of my life to soften your rigour, and to render you happy; but to avoid all further discussions

on the subject, I here repeat that you *must* be mine; my honour—my life, depends upon your being my wife.—Delays are therefore idle, and in three nights hence I must receive your hand at the altar. Reflect then, that as no earthly power can prevent this, whether you would not do well to let me owe my happiness to your gentle compassion—you cannot escape me, for I have taken every possible precaution to frustrate any intention of the kind.—Tears or entreaties will not prevail to alter your destiny—I repeat, you *must* be mine! —oh! be so willingly."

"Oh! never, never," articulated the affrighted Adelaide, and rushed from his presence, but had hardly tottered a few steps ere she was sinking insensible on the marble pavement of the hall, when Madame de Beauvais, who was hastening towards her, caught her in her arms, and conducted her to her apartment.

Adelaide, since the hour in which she had become acquainted with the real character

racter of this lady, had ever observed towards her a cold and distant politeness; when, therefore, Madame now lavished on her the most maternal caresses and soothing epithets, Adelaide turned from her with disgust, and was soon left alone to the indulgence of her grief and fears. The hint which the Marquis had given her of the impossibility of escaping, deprived her of every hope of being able to avoid the dreadful fate which threatened her. She had received no letters from the Abbess of Santa Catherina, therefore could not hope the interference of powerful friends to save her and her beloved St. Croix, whose horrible situation still filled her with the most agonizing grief and consternation. One hope, however, sprung up, to chear her tortured heart, and that hope pointed to Father Bertrand; she revived as she thought of the friendly disposition which the friar had manifested; but her hopes were quickly repressed by a consideration which filled her mind with amazement and

grief, and she was soon convinced, that had the Father been able to effect the liberation of her lover, there existed small probability that he would still have remained a prisoner in the turret. Thus plunged again, by this unaccountable circumstance, into unutterable sorrow, Adelaide perceived that all hope of earthly assistance seemed vain; and with a mind humiliated and agonized by the conviction which her dependance on man had given her of her want of faith and confidence in the protection of the Most High, she knelt in lowly contrition, and bewailing her error, implored that help from Heaven which she knew Heaven alone could give. She prayed with fervor, and soon the burning tears of passionate sorrow were succeeded by the mild soft drops which flow from the uplifted eye of piety.—Oh, religion! how powerful is thy influence! Divine consoler, thy meek and holy voice breathes heavenly peace to the virtuous, and ever tranquillizes the breaking heart of penitence, and

and to Thee alone the passions own submission.—No hand but thine can enchain their rebellious force, for where thou art not, reason ever weeps the wreck of morals.—Ah! wherefore should rancour and inhuman bigotry assume thy glorious name, and with fanatic fury tear from Christianity the bright attribute of universal love?

CHAP. XIII.

COMPOSED, and relying on the care of Heaven, Adelaide now resolved to await with patient resignation the arrival of the hour when the friar had promised to conduct her to the turret. She did not leave her apartments any more that day, justly conceiving, that should she join the party in the castle, the Marquis might be led to suppose that she was in some measure reconciled to his intentions; and the day passed heavily, for although her confidence in Heaven was still predominant in her heart, her thoughts would dwell with tenacious earnestness on the distressing circumstances

ces in which she was involved; and amid her other cares, she often reverted to Henrietta.

Some time had elapsed since she had received the last billet from the Chevalier de Valmont, and she saw no prospect that his offered assistance in aiding any attempt she might make to leave the castle, was likely to be renewed. The residence of the strangers in the castle prevented Jaques from visiting her often, and the door of the deserted rooms having been walled up during her absence, there was no possibility of meeting the old man there. It was not in her power to make Marcella acquainted with the secret friendship of Jaques, as he had repeatedly given Adelaide hints that it would not be prudent to entrust the old woman with any thing of importance, as, although her principles might be good, she had, nevertheless, no command over her tongue, but would, in defiance of discretion, almost invariably reveal the secrets which mistaken confidence or chance

had put into her possession. Adelaide earnestly wished to see Jaques, for she desired to acquaint him with the sentiments of Father Bertrand, of the sincerity of whose friendship involuntary doubts would sometimes arise in her mind.

Nearly a fortnight had passed since Jaques had visited her, and although the dog now frequently strayed to the great gate, yet he always returned without any billet in his collar. The more she now reflected on this point, the more anxious respecting Jaques she became, and at length she asked Marcella when she had seen the porter? Marcella hesitated to reply, but on Adelaide's repeating her question, she said — "Why, Mademoiselle, poor Jaques has been very ill, and near to die, and so he has got a companion, a huge ill-looking fellow, recommended by Monsieur Villette, to assist him in his office; but Jaques is getting better now, and then, I suppose, the other will go. I did not like to tell you any thing about it, my lady,

lady, for I know your kind heart would have been grieved very much about the poor old man; however, he is now much better."

This information afforded Adelaide another distressing proof of how futile is our dependance on the assistance of man alone; again she raised her eyes with pious hope to Heaven, and as the shades of the evening spread o'er the mountains, she suffered all the tremor of expectation, and the fear of disappointment; but at length she heard the castle clock chime the half hour after ten—another half hour and she should behold her Henry, and listen to the ardently desired relation of the events which had made him a prisoner. The other quarter soon chimed—Marcella slept—and Adelaide prepared for the summons of the friar. Veiled, and with the lamp in her trembling hand, she awaited in the anti-room his approach. The clock struck eleven, and almost instantly after came a slight tap at the door—she opened it, and

beheld the friar. In silence he took her hand, and led her hastily along the corridor, nor relaxed his speed till they had passed through the concealed pannel, and were ascending the narrow stone stairs, leading to the battlements, when they reached the turret, and once more Adelaide found herself in the embrace of her lover.

As soon as the emotions which attended the first moments of their meeting had subsided, the friar said—"Suppress, my dear children, all this agitation, and let us employ the time in giving those mutual explanations which are so essential for each to hear. I will spare the Count the trouble of relating his adventure, for I fear the detail of his mental sufferings would delay us too long. The summons to join his regiment, which your lover had received, was a mere forgery to ensnare him," continued Bertrand; "he was, however, allowed to proceed on his journey till he reached St. Maximin; but when he again set off to pursue his route, he was suddenly attacked

attacked by several hired emissaries of the Marquis, overpowered, and forced into a carriage, and conducted to a vile dilapidated mansion among the woods, where he was despoiled of his military habit, and, in a wretched disguise, with a gag in his mouth, again placed in the carriage; and at length, by bye-roads and a circuitous route, brought hither, and confined in this turret, where—but I need not distress you, by expatiating on his sufferings, you can conceive what they must have been, as he was strongly chained to the ground; and even now, although I have filed away some of his chains, he is obliged to suffer the weight of others, to conceal from his keeper that he is even so much at liberty. A horrid fellow, who passes as an assistant to the porter, fills this office, and attends his prisoner twice a-day with food, which is bad, and scanty enough."

Adelaide now drew from beneath her veil a small flask of wine and a cake, all the little store she could steal from her own table,

table, unobserved by Marcella; but she soon found that her solicitude was useless, as her lover assured her that the good Father Bertrand had not omitted to procure for, and bring him every comfort of that kind which he could wish for. But he did not reject this present of love; and the wine, which Adelaide slightly partook of, was doubly prized by her Henry.

"But why, Father, is my Henry here still?" asked the lovely girl, anxiously raising her eyes to the friar, with a look beseeching assistance.

"Because, when I first saw him, it was impossible to remove him, as his excessive weakness, and the massy size of his chains, rendered delays unavoidable; the chains are, however, almost all filed off, and now that the Count has beheld you, he will soon recover strength to escape."

"But will it be within three days, Father?" eagerly asked Adelaide, in a tone of fear and anxiety, which betrayed to her lover that she dreaded some event to occur within

within that period, which might involve them in new disasters.

"Oh, Adelaide," he exclaimed, "what is this misfortune which too surely threatens us? Am I, at the moment when hope animates me to every exertion, to be plunged again into all the horrors which my fears for you occasion me?"

A shivering fit of terror seized on the weak frame of Adelaide—she could not reply, but averted her face, to conceal the expression of anguish which the anticipation of evil had depicted on her features, while the friar said—"How weak are these causeless alarms! Do not agitate yourself thus, my son; Mademoiselle Adelaide had no other meaning than anxiety to hasten the hour of your departure."

Fully sensible of her imprudence in having awakened such violent emotions in the mind of her lover, Adelaide now turned towards him with a look of tenderness, which chased from her lovely countenance every trait of fear and sorrow, and softly murmured—

murmured—"Ah! can you wonder at my impatient anxiety, when I behold you thus?"

"Encourage hope, and place your confidence in the Most High, my children," said the friar, "and delay not, with vain surmises, the relations which should occupy these fleeting moments."

"Pardon me, Father, I am all attention," said Adelaide, withdrawing for a moment her eyes from the care-worn figure of her lover, who, still gazing on the mistress of his heart, seemed almost insensible to ought else.

"I told you, my daughter," resumed the Father Bertrand, "I told you that the letter which recalled the Count St. Croix to his regiment was a forgery, but it still remains for me to explain how I discovered this: business of importance to my convent had called me to St. Maximin, where I arrived but two days before the Count; I had seen him but twice in the castle, yet I perfectly recollected his figure as he rode into

into the court of the inn where I had taken up my abode; but, as I imagined that were I to accost him, I might be considered as an intruder, I forbore to do so; and soon after, I beheld the Count again on horseback, attended by his servant. They both rode off with speed; and no sooner was the Count out of sight, than I involuntarily regretted that I had not addressed him. During the whole night his idea haunted my mind with a singular kind of melancholy.—Alas! my presentiment of something dreadful was verified in the morning, for I had scarcely sat down to my humble breakfast, when the host informed me that the young officer had been murdered about two leagues from the town on the preceding evening, and that his servant had been brought back to the inn about half an hour before I came down to breakfast. Shocked at this lamentable tale, I asked to see the man. I found him badly wounded, and almost speechless. The moment I beheld him, I recollected having seen him

one

one evening in deep conversation with the Marquis St. Viviers. I was too well acquainted with the Marquis not to suspect that some villainy lurked beneath his familiar and secret correspondence with this man, and knowing his instant admiration for you, I doubted not but some treachery had been practised—but, suffice it to say, that I succeeded in making the wretched Claude fully sensible of his own guilt, and at length the miserable being confessed that he had been bribed to betray the Count, his master, into the hands of hired ruffians, who had dragged him into the woods, either to kill him, or carry him off to some secret prison. But it seems that this treacherous servant was the dupe of his own vile ingratitude; for the ruffians, doubtless at the command of their employer, who, of course, would take every precaution to avoid discovery, had also attacked and left Claude as dead in the woods. One of the assassins, I was told by the dying Claude, was disguised in the garb

of

of a white friar; and this was confirmed by the Count's relation, who also informed me, that the ruffian, on entering the carriage into which they had forced their victim, had divested himself of this garment, and concealed it under the seat; and it was most probably that habit, together with your portrait, which, in the struggle, had been torn from the bosom of the Count, that you beheld in the uninhabited chambers."

Adelaide now suddenly recollected the figure she had seen passing through the subterraneous passages of the castle, on the night of her attempted flight with De Valmont; and as it was about the period that the ruffians must have brought the Count to the castle, she would have conjectured that that figure was one of them, had she not been informed that he had thrown off his monkish disguise on entering the carriage into which they had forced St. Croix. She now mentioned the circumstance of having seen a stranger in the subterranean passages,

passages, and was assured by the Count, that her surmise was right, as the man had again assumed that habit on their reaching St. Viviers Castle, which they had entered by the very passages by which Adelaide was attempting to leave the castle; and that had she entered them but half an hour later, she would inevitably have met the other two ruffians, bearing the wounded, and almost insensible St. Croix to his lofty prison. Indeed, it was this very circumstance which led to the discovery of her projected escape, as the Marquis and Bionville were sitting up in a room by which she and De Valmont could not avoid passing; and the Chevalier having accidentally heard a footstep, he looked out after them; and having informed the Marquis of his discovery, they called up some of the servants, and by hastening round to the outward walls, met them, and defeated their plan. Father Bertrand now continued to say, that the miserable Claude, overpowered by the terrible consciousness of his

his guilt, and the agony of his mortal wounds, expired, even while he was speaking to him; "and thus by losing at the time all certain evidence of the Marquis's criminality," added the friar, "I was bereft of all hope of accusing him of the crime, which I could not doubt his having committed.

"On my return to my convent, I found that brother Dubois, the Marquis's former confessor, was dead, and I succeeded in obtaining that situation, hoping that at some future period I might bring him to a sense of his enormities, or gain possession of the means of bringing to justice an impenitent offender. But, above all, I hoped to be able to save you, my daughter, from the terrible fate which I feared awaited you; but your doubts of me frustrated all my plans. I once asked the Marquis whether you was provided with a spiritual director, and requested to be allowed to become your confessor; but he replied, that you had constantly rejected all his represent-

ations, as to the impiety of so long neglecting the duties of religion, and that you had invariably insisted that you needed not any other guide than your own conscience; this I suspected to be false, but I could not urge the matter any further, lest I should excite suspicion, and thus disappoint my own designs; and at length Providence has graciously made me your protector, without any effort of my own."

"Oh! Father," cried Adelaide, looking on the friar, with eyes beaming gratitude and veneration, "how consoled should I have been by your ghostly counsel and benediction!—Ah! how has my heart sighed to partake of those sacred ceremonies and duties, the performance of which are so soothing to an afflicted mind!"

"I doubt it not, my child," replied the friar; "and now let us hope that the hour of deliverance and freedom is fast approaching, for however dark our prospects apparently may be, yet we should not despair."

Alas! the frightful ideas of the Count St.

St. Croix's situation, and the Marquis's design of forcing her into a marriage with himself, presented so horrible a prospect to the harrassed mind of Adelaide, that it needed the exertion of all her piety to prevent her yielding to despondence. She raised her eyes to the face of the friar, and timidly asked, on what circumstance he grounded his hope of speedy deliverance?

The pious Bertrand cast on her a look of mild reproof, and pointed to Heaven.—Adelaide was abashed, contrite tears fell from her eyes, and she regarded her lover with more than usual softness, while she sought to inspire him with those hopes which the friar had again awakened in her bosom. St. Croix, however, was not so easily consoled; he had perceived that some secret grief still dwelt upon her mind, and with ardent tenderness he implored her to confess the truth, averring that his fancy would torture him with a thousand imaginary dangers, which might be more terrific than the reality. The friar, but too

too well discerning that the impatient anxiety of the Count would, indeed, torture him with all the horrors of suspensive fear, checked the inclination he felt to chide the imprudence of Adelaide, and now joined in requesting her to say what it was she so much dreaded; representing at the same time, that suspense would be more hurtful to the Count than a knowledge of the truth.

Thus urged, Adelaide, deeply regretting her having rendered explanation necessary, faintly said—"The Marquis has sworn to me an intention of forcing me to the altar three nights hence."

Words cannot describe the agony of St. Croix, nor the consternation of the friar.

Adelaide, overwhelmed and dismayed with the effect her declaration had produced, felt all her senses failing, and, with a deep, heart-felt sigh, fainted.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

WHEN she reopened her eyes, she found herself enfolded in the trembling arms of her Henry, whose hurried and tender accents sounded in her ears as the last fond, mournful adieus of a dying friend, whom we must no more behold on earth. Her heart anticipated all the inexpressible woe of being again separated from him, and she vowed to die rather than submit to the designs of the Marquis.

"Amiable, unfortunate pair!" sighed the friar, "why am I fearful of speaking to you in the language of hope?—revive, and again let me warn you that these wild

bursts of sorrow and despair offend your Creator, and may, perhaps, plunge you both into inevitable ruin."

"Father, you but mock our misery with this display of pity, when you stretch not forth a hand to save us," wildly cried St. Croix; "is it not now, even now, yet in your power to end all this wretchedness and oppression?—why fly ye not to your superior, or to the magistrates of Grenoble, and justly explaining our situation, effect our deliverance?"

The friar, instead of replying, had nearly sunk on the ground, and uttering a cry, which spoke unutterable misery, exclaimed —"Oh! rash, oh! ungrateful youth, how have I merited that you should thus upbraid me with my guilt and wretchedness? thou knowest I dare not accuse thy persecutor, lest my name be discovered, and the infamy of my past life overwhelm with ruin and disgrace one of the most amiable of human beings."

"Pardon my rashness, oh pardon me, father,"

father," cried St. Croix, in a tone of bitter self-reproach; "forgive my frantic rage —oh! think not that I could urge the father of my generous friend—that friend who has hazarded so much to preserve my beloved!—oh! think not that I could urge the father of De Valmont to ruin such a son!"

"The father of De Valmont!" exclaimed the astonished Adelaide.

"Yes, lady," said the agitated Father Bertrand, "I am the father of De Valmont —yes, with proud exultation I boast that I am the father of such a noble being, and with shame, and most exquisite grief, confess that my being known to be so would brand his name with infamy, and expose myself to an ignominious death. —Oh! for my son's sake, never breathe your knowledge of this fact. — Alas! he would have laid down his life to have served you and your lover. Even within this month, although surrounded with perils, he has, with his lovely bride, been lingering in France to effect your

liberation. Could he have hoped that the laws of France would have given protection to a niece of the Marquis St. Viviers, for such he has always supposed you to be, against the power of an uncle deputed your sole guardian, he would have publicly sought redress for you; but relative power is here too firmly established to allow such a hope; in secresy only, therefore, could he plan your deliverance.—I saw him surrounded with dangers which he dreamt not of—I flew to his retreat—I revealed myself—procured him the means of immediate flight—commanded his absence, and promised to take upon me the care of your fortunes. At length for my sake and his Henrietta's, he fled, and is now safe in England — You look all astonishment, young lady," added the friar, after a pause of emotion; "at a more convenient season you shall hear my mournful tale; it is short, but it furnishes a lesson for the subjection of the passions. Condemn not my son or his amiable bride for their seeming

desertion

desertion of you—alas! nothing can exceed their anxiety for your fate. I have a letter for you from your friend, but I feared to deliver it to you, or to reveal their real circumstances, lest by an unguarded word, you might have injured my only treasure—my brave, my noble son. Pity the fears—the tenderness of a parent, Mademoiselle, and while I intercede for pardon, suffer me to vow to you that I would willingly hazard the few remaining years of my life to save you, did I not fear that should my discovery and death ensue, my son would be undone."

Adelaide could not avoid feeling interested and affected by the strong display of paternal love which the friar exhibited, "Father," said the lovely maid, "you regard us next to your son—can we desire more? and may we not hope that you, who possess so much feeling, will, if it is possible to prevent our ruin, exert yourself to that purpose? You have consoled me much by the assurance of my beloved friend's safety,

and the delivery of Henrietta's letter to me I shall receive as a pledge that you will not neglect us."

"Assuredly I will not," replied the friar, with solemn earnestness; "all I can do I will, and that is not a little. But come, dear amiable lovers, you must now consent to bid each other adieu. The morning beam is faintly rising in the eastern horizon, and if we linger here much longer, all my hopes may be disappointed."

The parting of St. Croix and his Adelaide was a scene which description could but weakly paint—the hearts of virtuous lovers, trembling on the brink of ruin, can only conceive their feelings.

CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

EXCESSIVE sorrow had now so benumbed the faculties of Adelaide, that she was scarcely conscious of existence during the remainder of the night, and it was not till the warm meridianal sunbeams had thrown their glowing light on the wide and majestic scenery, which could be viewed from the window of her chamber, that she awoke from the chilling stupor which had seized her mind. In vain had Marcella attempted to recall her suspended reason; motionless she had sat in the chair into which she had thrown herself on returning to her room. Pale and sad, she looked slowly around,

and with convulsive shudderings, gave indications of approaching illness, which, however, the cares of poor Marcella prevented, by prevailing on her to retire to bed; and now, Adelaide, sensible that indisposition might prevent her from seeing her Henry at night, took with docility the soothing soporific offered by her attendant, and soon lost, in a few hours deep repose, the horrible consciousness of her misfortunes.

'Twas evening when she again awoke, and the moon was already gliding up the heavens—Adelaide started from her pillow —a confused and imperfect recollection that Father Bertrand had desired her to be ready to accompany him that night to the turret, now rushed on her mind, and, with trembling haste, she arose and dressed herself; while Marcella, amazed at her celerity, could scarce assist her in what she conceived to be a very strange whim for a sick person, who had been confined to her couch during the whole day. Adelaide

was,

was, however, extremely refreshed, and each passing moment brought more clearly to her remembrance every particular of the last interview in the turret. The next night was destined to behold her forced nuptials with the abhorred Marquis, the present therefore presented the only hope of escape, if indeed the friar could accomplish so difficult an affair. It was true that the Marquis had warned her that her steps were so closely watched, that flight would be impracticable, but at all events the effort must be made, and the situation of St. Croix was such as would inspire her with courage equal to every exertion.

As these reflections occurred, Adelaide felt the necessity of not yielding to timidity and fear. She had every thing to fear from any imprudence and weakness which she might indulge; and now she became sensible of the impropriety of having risen so precipitately, an act which she observed had created considerable surprise and suspicion in the mind of Marcella. Trem-

bling at the idea that this rashness might prove the ruin of all her hopes, she now feigned returning indisposition, and once more retired to bed, and thus effectually lulled all the busy surmises of her attendant, who attributed her leaving her couch to the effect of a disordered mind.

When Adelaide had once more resumed her pillow, Marcella drew one of the large old-fashioned chairs close to the bedside, and sitting down, declared her intention of watching beside her lady during the night. The avowal of this intention threw the lovely object of her cares into the utmost alarm; and she assured the attentive Marcella, that if she deprived herself of sleep, merely to watch over her, that her own repose would certainly be destroyed. After some entreaties and representations on the part of Marcella, and as obstinate a rejection of her services on that of Adelaide, the attendant was compelled to submit to the will of her lady, whom she now informed, that the Marquis had been several

ral times to the door of the anti-chamber, enquiring after her health; and that both Madame de Beauvais and Madame Villette, with a physician, had been at her bedside for near an hour in the morning—"And the Marquis, Mademoiselle," continued Marcella, "the Marquis, the last time he came this evening, left this little billet, which he desired might be given to you the moment that you should seem able to read it."

Adelaide took the billet, and with mingled fear and hope, perused it. The Marquis wrote with passionate tenderness—deplored her illness—confessed some apprehension that his hasty avowal of the necessity of their immediate nuptials had overcome her spirits—intreated for pardon for his precipitation, and solemnly assured her that he would delay their union till she was able to reconcile herself to the unavoidable necessity of bestowing upon him her hand.

Adelaide could not credit what she read

—she re-perused the billet, with emotions such as only those in a similar situation can conceive. Her eyes did not deceive her, and, while her bosom palpitated with joy and gratitude to Heaven for this respite, she resolved to affect a continuance of her indisposition, as the only means of delaying, for awhile, the accomplishment of the hated designs of her persecutor.

Imagining that she had best inform Marcella of the nature of this billet, which filled her mind with a delight which she could not disguise, she intimated to the old woman the Marquis's intention of endeavouring to force her into a marriage on the following night, and that he had written to acquaint her with this fortunate change in his resolves.

"You are obliged to the doctor, then, Mademoiselle," said Marcella, whose countenance, while Adelaide spoke, exhibited the utmost amazement, "for I heard him say to Madame de Beauvais, that if you was awakened from your lethargy by any fright

or

or trouble, that it would certainly be the instant death of you. When he went away, Madame Villette said he was an old fool, and she was sure that he would try and persuade the Marquis that you ought not to be flurried, and so she supposed he would give up for awhile, and she should be obliged to stay in the hideous gloomy castle some time longer. Madame de Beauvais looked quite sad, and said she wished that she herself had had nothing to do with the business, and that she believed the Marquis had much better let you go into a convent. And now, Mademoiselle," continued Marcella, " Madame Villette looked quite angry, but she seemed afraid to speak much before a lady so much her superior; and so she left the room, and Madame de Beauvais followed her. But I'll tell you what is more surprising than all—Mademoiselle, do you know that there is not one servant in all the castle that knew any thing about my lord, the Marquis's design of marrying you so soon as to-morrow

to-morrow night; and so you see, my dear young lady, that these vile people —these Villettes, and Madame de Beauvais, were the only ones thought fit to be trusted with the plot."

The adoption of this extremely mysterious conduct suggested to Adelaide, that were the Marquis really possessed of the legal power over her, which he so loudly boasted of, there could be little occasion for such dark and secret plans; and which at the same time seemed to imply a consciousness of guilt and treachery more extensive than she had before conjectured. But, at all events, she had obtained an important delay in the execution of the meditated villainy; and, encouraged by such an unexpected event, she felt all her hopes of deliverance revive; besides, the mention of the doctor had inspired her with an idea that, should he again visit her, she might, by privately revealing to him her situation, and the unprecedented treatment of her lover, interest the medical man to acquaint

acquaint the Governor of Grenoble with their confinement, and thus put a speedy conclusion to their sufferings.

The idea of sending information to the Governor by Jaques, of her own situation, had frequently occurred to her previous to finding her lover; but, well knowing that could the Marquis produce any legal authority over her, that no other person could interfere, she had as constantly been compelled to drop her intention; but now, that she more than suspected that he was not in possession of such a power, she instantly resolved on doing so, and bitterly regretted that Jaques was not able to come to her apartment, as he might have dispatched the letter she intended to address to the Governor, whom she doubted not would commence a more speedy investigation of the situation of herself and the Count, than could be hoped for from the kind interference of the Abbess of Santa Catherina; if, indeed, her letters should ever reach that lady. The clock of the castle had not struck ten when she ordered Mar-

cella to retire to her closet, an order which the old woman gladly obeyed, as she by no means liked to sit up till twelve o'clock, an hour when the noises in the castle were most frequently heard.

For nearly half an hour after Marcella had retired, Adelaide did not dare to move, lest her attendant was not yet asleep. At length she ventured to softly rise, and hurry on her dress, the loud respiration of Marcella assuring her that she might leave her chamber undiscovered. After another quarter of an hour's anxious watchfulness, she heard, with palpitating heart, the low signal of the friar—quickly she opened the door, and silently Cæsar stole after her, while, with light footsteps, which echo could not catch, she glided onwards by the side of Father Bertrand; when, just as they reached the south end of the corridor, the ancient deep-toned bell in the eastern tower tolled heavily, and a blaze of light flashed from the east gallery, the folding doors of which being wide open,

open, admitted a full view of the interior. The friar uttered an ejaculation, and crossed himself, while Adelaide clasped his trembling arm, and was sinking senseless at his feet, when the dog gave a dismal howl, and then barking furiously, ran towards the gallery, from which another bright flash of light issued, and the folding doors were flung to with more than mortal violence ere the animal had reached them.

The friar raised the trembling Adelaide, and softly whispering in a faint and almost inarticulate voice—"That there was no possibility of visiting the turret that night," led her back to her apartments, adding, when they had reached the door of the anti-room—"Let not this disappointment afflict you, my daughter; you have nothing at present to apprehend from the Marquis, who is too much alarmed by the idea that you are dangerously indisposed to hazard increasing your illness by any further precipitation—to-morrow night, I trust, we shall be more successful.—But I must now

hasten

hasten to the performance of an awful duty, to which the appearance we have just witnessed too surely summons me.—Be not you alarmed—innocence and goodness like your's should fear no evil.—Endeavour to divert your attention by a perusal of this, and when you read, remember that divine precept, which commands us to love and pity our enemies."

The friar now placed a small roll of paper in the trembling hand of his young companion. His words would have comforted and re-assured her, had not the tone of his voice, so hollow-broken and agitated, apparently evinced that he himself suffered all the excess of surprise and awe, of which he humanely wished to divest her.

"Oh Father!" ejaculated the terrified afflicted maid, "what do these horrors import?"

The friar uttered a deep groan, pressed her hand convulsively, and retreated down the passage; while Cæsar rushed past him,

and

and followed his mistress into the anti-room, the door of which she fastened, and stole back to her chamber, overwhelmed with terror and grief. The tolling of the bell, and the light which she had just seen, did not so much affect her as the manner of the friar, which had in it something so mysteriously alarming, that she could perceive that the circumstance which they had just witnessed had indeed filled his mind with the most indescribable emotions.

Scarce had this reflection crossed the mind of Adelaide, when the loud bell was again heard to toll, and the most agonizing shrieks resounded through the castle.—Breathless with horror, she sunk on her knees, and inclining her face on the edge of the couch, attempted to pray; but the fear-checked aspirations which trembled on her lips, were but half pronounced; for a loud shrill voice approached to the outward door, and with thrilling shrieks, cried—"Murder! murder! murder!"

The senses of Adelaide could not support

port this shock, and for some a friendly insensibility saved her from experiencing all the agonies of unbounded terror.

The voice of Marcella gave the first sounds which struck her ears as she slowly revived, and yet she fancied that the thrilling voice still vibrated through the lofty galleries, and she demanded of her ancient attendant whether she still heard it?

Marcella, with pallid looks, and tremulous accents, replied—"that she had indeed heard it—I was awakened from my sleep, Mademoiselle, by the most woeful shrieks that ever I heard—and there was the bell a tolling too—and Cæsar almost mad. —Oh, mercy! I thought, the moment that I heard all these dismal sounds, that my life would leave me. But I soon guessed that it was the spirit of my poor dear lady; but, indeed, Mademoiselle, although I thought of you, I had no more power to stir than if I had been dead, till all was quiet again, and then I made a shift to get on my clothes, and creep here to your bedside—

bedside—but, oh! St. Andrew defend me! if it was not as bad as hearing the ghost, when I found your bed empty, and you lying like dead on the ground—ready dressed too—and all——well, well, but pray, Mademoiselle, what made you rise?"

Adelaide was too much the victim of alarm and dread to attend to this question; and Marcella perceiving her wild and abstracted look and manner, again imputed her having left her bed to a slight degree of delirium, and severely blamed herself for not having watched near her. All was now quiet in the castle, and the bright rays of the morning, at length, lulled the fears of Adelaide and her attendant, who once more was prevailed upon to retire to rest for a few hours. But Adelaide could not sleep—the conjecture that the papers which the friar had given her were letters from St. Croix, prevented her from seeking any repose; and when she was again alone, she arose, and eagerly took them from her pocket, and began to open them.

One,

One, she found, was, indeed, a letter containing a few lines, penned by the now feeble hand of her Henry; in which he informed her, that in the fear that Father Bertrand might not find an opportunity of conducting her to his prison that night, he had made an effort to write a few lines, to assure her that he was not worse in health, and that, supported by the idea of frequently beholding her, he trusted he should soon recover, and that the all-gracious Protector of the innocent would soon vouchsafe the means of their liberation.—St. Croix likewise added, that the Father Bertrand had stolen up to visit him in the evening, and had consoled him with the most solemn assurances that the Marquis had resolved to delay for some time the execution of his intentions respecting herself.

Several times Adelaide tremblingly reperused this short epistle, and with heartfelt emotions perceived but too evidently the constraint which her lover, in pity to her,

her, had put upon his feelings. In anguish she wept his situation, so singular and alarming; and could the sacrifice of her own life have obtained for him liberty and happiness, most willingly would she have even died to secure his felicity. Fervent and animated was the prayer which she now offered up to Heaven, and in which she implored the assistance of that glorious Power whose all-searching eye pervades creation.

Rising from her devotions with rather more composure of mind, her eyes once more fell on the papers given her by the friar, and almost instantly she recognised a letter superscribed in the hand-writing of Henrietta. The claims of friendship now feebly awakened new emotions in her mind, and she eagerly opened the envelope. It did, indeed, contain a letter from her amiable friend, and with that deep interest which gratitude and affection inspires, she read as follows:

"Once more has Henrietta the happiness of

of addressing a few lines to her ever dear Adelaide, and yet I often throw down my pen, to enquire of myself whether I am not under the influence of one of those pleasing illusions of fancy, which sometimes haunt our dreams? Again I start from my suspensive reverie, and feel the joyful conviction that I am indeed at liberty to inform my friend that I still cherish for her the tenderest sentiments which friendship can inspire. But will not Adelaide ask—'How then have you deserted me, Henrietta?'—Necessity, I reply, has compelled me to this act, seemingly so inconsistent with my professions.—I have been in the power of that abominable being, the Chevalier Bionville—De Valmont, at the hazard of losing life and fame, has released me. In secresy we afterwards lurked in the city of Embrun, in the vain hope of making Adelaide the partner of our flight.—The Chevalier de Valmont has long been ignorant to whom he owed his being.—Just at the moment when he was on the point

point of setting out in disguise for St. Viviers Castle, a venerable aged monk rushed into the room in which we were concealed. He confessed himself to be the father of De Valmont—he proved the truth of this assertion, and used such arguments as persuaded his astonished and revering son to promise to depart with me immediately for England; and bound himself by the most solemn vows, to use his utmost exertions to release you from the power of the Marquis, whom the monk has likewise informed me, is supposed not to be your uncle, although invested as your sole guardian, with full power to command your obedient acquiescence to his will. Soon convinced of your own want of means to affect your liberation, we, though reluctantly on your account, consented to hasten our departure, but not without most solemnly committing you to the care of the monk, whom you will certainly know as the Father Bertrand. Ere we departed,

the father of my De Valmont united our hands.

"Our journey was performed with success; and after having reached Dover in safety, I cannot seek repose ere I have written to you, my friend, whose situation fills my mind with so much grief, that I cannot enjoy the conviction of my own safety.—Yet I feel a faint presentiment that you will yet escape the power of that monster, to whom the law has given such a fatal authority over you. Once, in a fit of despair, I hazarded an appeal on your behalf to the commandant of Embrun, but he soon returned me a most freezing answer, coldly, but politely assuring me, that it was not possible that the Marquis St. Viviers could be called to account for any exertion of his just authority over a young lady so unequivocally placed under his protection, especially at the representation of a foreign lady, with whose country his gracious Monarch had just

just commenced a war. Thus foiled in this attempt, I fell into despondency, and was half distracted, when the father of my De Valmont arrived to console me with the firm assurance of using every exertion to save you. But I will not say what I have, and do endure, when I tremblingly think that the power of your oppressor is so unlimited and ——."

Here the letter broke off, but was continued in the hand-writing of De Valmont, who apologized for the abruptness of his Henrietta's conclusion, by saying, that she had been suddenly taken violently ill: and indeed the truth of this assertion was but too evident in the scarcely intelligible lines which her trembling hand had traced. De Valmont then continued to lament his own inability to serve Adelaide, and repeatedly assured the lovely girl that his father would not fail in his efforts to release her from the power of the Marquis.

The perusal of this epistle excited in the bosom of Adelaide all the mingled feelings

of affectionate friendship, grief, hope, and fear. That both Henrietta and De Valmont would have hazarded even their dearest hopes to extricate her from the evils that environed her, she well knew, and her heart confessed their kindness, while the knowledge of her friend's illness afflicted her in no small degree; but Father Bertrand had recently assured her that Henrietta was well.

This pleasing idea was speedily succeeded by reflections on the singular conduct of the friar, whose boasted professions of having the power of saving either herself or her lover from the base designs of the Marquis, she almost suspected to be insincere; still, as every thought on this subject could but be conjecture, she endeavoured to forbear harrassing her own mind by indulging a train of doubts and fears, which as they could not possibly fix on the truth, were not only weak, but criminal.—But, alas! as Adelaide sought to divert her thoughts from perplexing surmises, and

fix

fix them on devotional exercises, the horrible idea of the Count, her father, having been the destroyer of Garcio de Dumont, rushed on her mind, and impressed her soul with the most sad and fearful presages of the impending evils which hovered over her lover and herself. Humbly she wept before Heaven, then, with shuddering horror recollected, that she had not as yet acquainted St. Croix with her own knowledge of that most dreadful circumstance; and with this frightful recollection came the conviction that every sentiment of honour and justice should compel her not to suffer the Count to wed the daughter of a seducer and murderer.

What language can paint the agonies which this reflection created in the bosom of the hapless Adelaide, or describe the conflicts of her mind, as the idea of resigning all hope of ever being united to a lover so tenderly regarded, became more fixed, and recalled all the horror and shame

which the sad belief of her father's guilt ever inspired in her soul.

To dwell long on the criminality of a parent, was, however, by no means consistent with either the duteous affection or moral principles of Adelaide; and while with burning tears she bewailed his commission of the awful deed laid to his charge by the Marquis, she yet always endeavoured to turn her thoughts from the subject, lest her detestation of the crime should lead her to forget the reverence she had owed to the author of it, who from having been her earthly parent, was most undoubtedly, notwithstanding his guilt, entitled to all the lenity which filial piety ever enjoins.

With the pious intention of endeavouring to forget, if possible, for a moment, this horrible occasion of her grief, she returned to the examination of the papers which Father Bertrand had put into her hand, the remainder of which she found was a narrative of his own life.

"Ah!"

"Ah!" sighed Adelaide, "I will not attempt to read this—Father Bertrand intimated that he had committed some crime, which, if known, must load his son with infamy; and such a tale is not adapted to my present state of mind."

She folded up the papers and concealed them in a private drawer, when she arose and passed the hours, till Marcella awoke, in fervent prayer.

The inhabitants of the castle had not long been in motion, when Madame Villette stalked into the apartments of Adelaide, who looked so pale, that her intimation of being too ill to converse with strangers, was not doubted by that lady, who, however, made a thousand enquiries respecting how she really found herself; till at length the disgust and displeasure which held Adelaide almost silent, became so apparent to this vulgar woman, that she started up from the chair, and flounced out of the room, muttering a rageful threat which her passion rendered unintelligible, but which

caused an involuntary pang of fear to rise in the bosom of the amiable, persecuted Adelaide.

"There, Mademoiselle, there, I told you what a frightful virago that great tall Madame Villette is!" exclaimed Marcella, when she was out of hearing; "she was just the same before the Chevalier Bionville took her to be his—his—housekeeper—her father was a low mechanic, at Grenoble, and she was the talk of all her neighbourhood for pride and sauciness."

"The housekeeper of the abominable Bionville!" murmured Adelaide, in a tone expressive of amazement and wounded dignity; "and is it possible that the Marquis is vile enough to have introduced such a being to my society?"

"Vile! Mademoiselle," repeated Marcella; "yes, yes, he's vile enough to do worse things than that when he takes it in his head; and I'm sure if I could get you out of this castle, I would try to do so, Mademoiselle; but it does not signify my running

running the hazard of my life to no purpose; for, as I told you the other day, young lady, all the doors are now so fast secured, and all the private outlets so completely nailed and walled up, that a mouse could not escape; even the broken part of the wall on the rampart, that we can see from this window, is strongly repaired, and centinels are set to keep watch every night—why, if an enemy was expected at our gates, it could not be worse."

Although Adelaide well knew that the castle had undergone considerable repairs and improvements, during her short absence, yet she was till this moment ignorant that centinels nightly paraded the ramparts; and now the dread that her visits to the turret might have been discovered, if any of the guards had espied the lamp of Father Bertrand as he led her along the battlements, almost inclined her to despair of being able to go there alone and unattended; the parapet of the battlements was much injured and decayed, and without a

light to guide her trembling footsteps, she would run the hazard of perishing, by falling from the lofty top of the building into the court beneath.—She shuddered, not at the idea of the danger to which she herself might be exposed in making an attempt to reach the turret, but her terror arose from the alarming idea of what her Henry would endure, should she meet her death under such a circumstance; and at the evils to which he must be exposed while still in the power of the Marquis, who undoubtedly would not consider her death as any motive to induce him to set his prisoner at liberty, who, on regaining his freedom, would employ every possible means of punishing the author of his troubles, and from whom, as he would consider St. Viviers as the destroyer of his Adelaide, no mercy must be expected. To avoid his own ruin and disgrace, the Marquis then would most certainly doom her lover either to death or imprisonment for life; but the same line of conduct was also to be looked

for

for from him, even if she did succeed in again visiting her Henry, unless the friar could accomplish their escape; and therefore she determined to run every risk in obtaining another interview with her beloved; and in case Father Bertrand did not come for her at the usual hour, to courageously brave the supernatural horrors which reigned in the castle, and the perils of the broken battlements, in her effort once more to see the affianced lord of her heart.

While these reflections occupied the mind of Adelaide, Marcella brought in the breakfast, and arranged the morning repast with more than usual care—praised the excellence of the chocolate—the cakes—the fruits, and made every possible effort to induce her young lady to relish her breakfast; but ere Adelaide had tasted her chocolate, Madame de Beauvais swam into the room, and languidly throwing herself into a chair, near the bedside, on which Adelaide now reclined, leaned over

Mademoiselle, and uttered a thousand polite enquiries after her health, which were answered with evasion and blushes; for although Adelaide had resolved to affect an appearance of continued indisposition, she was too artless to intimate what she knew was not strictly true, without suffering the keenest emotions of shame and self-reproach. Madame de Beauvais readily perceived that the young lady was much better, but as she chose to appear still extremely indisposed, Madame betrayed no doubts on the subject, but continued her expressions of regard and concern, and begged to take her breakfast with her amiable Mademoiselle de Monterci.

All the cares of poor Marcella were thus rendered unavailing, for Adelaide became so much agitated by the easy, but intrusive conduct of Madame de Beauvais, that she could hardly partake of the breakfast.

Madame, however, noticed not her emotion, but praised the *dejeune*; and, by extolling the various fruits, &c. endeavoured,

ed, as she said, to tempt the appetite of the charming invalid.

When breakfast was concluded, Madame de Beauvais announced an intention of continuing with Adelaide till her recovery should no longer require the attentions of friendship.

The object of her officious cares now coldly thanked her, and firmly declined the honour of her attendance.

Madame smiled—it was the smile of a woman of the world, and it greatly displeased Adelaide, for it said very plainly, —"You want to get rid of me."

The words which followed the lady's smile were infinitely more provoking, for she said, "You conceive me to be so much the friend of the Marquis, and as so dissipated a being, that you think me unworthy of your confidence or esteem.—When you have seen the world, you will learn to be less *fastidious*.—The romance of youth will then be ended, by the conviction that we are all (to use a vulgar phrase) no better

than

than we should be; and if you deny your friendship to all who are not perfect saints, you must e'en commence female anchoret.—I wish to serve you, Mademoiselle de Monterci, and you will act wisely in not rejecting my offers of friendship."

Adelaide turned from her with an air of cold incredulity.

"Nay," continued the lady, lowering her voice almost to a whisper, "do not misconceive me; I am not such a hypocrite as to offer you my *disinterested* friendship—indeed, there is no such thing in existence as *disinterested* friendship."

"Forbear, Madame de Beauvais, I entreat," interrupted Adelaide, in a voice which evinced how much she was shocked and offended by hearing such opinions:—"If what you aver were really true, I should grieve at the depravity of human nature, but could not feel inclined to converse on such a deplorable fact—I beg you to leave me to my repose."

"Do not be thus incredulous, Mademoiselle,"

selle," said Madame de Beauvais, "for be assured *this* kind of incredulity will ever expose you to become the dupe of designers and knaves.—But as this topic is unpleasing, I will drop it; but I cannot depart till I have finished making my proposals; if you do not acquiesce, things must continue as they are—I will be brief and ingenuous—It is impossible that you can have beheld my sojourning in this detested castle, without conjecturing that some powerful motive has detained me here. The motive has, indeed, been irresistible—I am ruined—deep play has despoiled me of every thing—I lost immense sums last winter at Paris—the Marquis was there with Bionville—they are my principal creditors, and almost all my estates are mortgaged to them.—The Marquis adores you—he hoped my influence would induce you to listen to him with patience—and in case I succeeded, he would have pardoned all that I am indebted to him.—Alas! I have failed with you—and now I have only one more chance

chance with the Marquis.—You will not willingly marry him—he must expire unless you are his, and therefore you must be *forced* to wed him—and on condition that I remain, and will swear, along with other witnesses, that you became voluntarily his wife, I shall have the restoration of my mortgaged lands—You shudder—you turn pale—*mon Dieu!*—to shudder at the idea of such a handsome man!—well, it cannot be helped—you don't like him—and therefore you should not have him.—Agree to sign an unconditional bond to pay me sixty thousand livres on the day that you come of age, and I on my part will to-morrow night contrive to steal you out of the castle, and soon place you in safety in the convent of Santa Catherina."

This most unexpected proposal would have filled the mind of Adelaide with unfeigned satisfaction, had it been made by any other person than Madame de Beauvais, in whose sincerity the lovely girl could place but small confidence; nor could

could she avoid feeling aukward and distressed at the idea of entering into any agreement with the sister of her who had deprived her unfortunate parent of life—yet still the situation in which both her beloved Henry and herself were placed, demanded immediate relief; and could she reject, perhaps, the only means which might occur of emancipation from the tyranny of the Marquis? — Impossible!— Besides, there was, she feared, but small probability of deriving any essential service from the Father Bertrand, whose fears of the power and revenge of St. Viviers, for some hidden crime, appeared but too much to influence his conduct. After a few moments hesitation, Adelaide said— "Inform me, Madame de Beauvais, whether you are acquainted with the particulars relating to the claims which the Marquis St. Viviers assures me I have to the name and estates of De Monterci, and we can then decide how far I can agree to your pecuniary demand?"

"You

"You certainly do not doubt your right, Mademoiselle!"

"I am undecided what to think in this respect," said Adelaide; "and yet it could not have been an artifice," she mentally added; "for St. Croix has expressed no particular doubts on this subject: yet 'tis singular," she continued, now addressing Madame de Beauvais, "very singular that my beloved father never once mentioned to me that he had a right to any other name than that of St. Viviers."

"Singular as your father's silence on this head may appear, 'tis nevertheless certain, that the Marquis, your guardian, has brought forward undeniable proofs that your father was really the son of the banished Count de Monterci; and by likewise producing a will made by your father some time prior to his setting off for Lisbon, and in which you are so completely left to his guardianship, that I believe you will find no possibility of escaping from his power, unless you accept my offers,

he

he has hitherto so well succeeded in all his plans, that it must require more management and art than you possess to be able to defeat his present intentions."

There was too much truth in the representations of Madame de Beauvais, for Adelaide not to perfectly acquiesce in her opinions; and now tremblingly indulging a hope of soon finding herself and St. Croix at liberty, she intimated to Madame de Beauvais her readiness to agree to her proposals.

The lady exultingly received her assent, saying—"Now you have acted prudently, Mademoiselle, and have saved yourself, for the Marquis has so firmly persuaded the King that your affections are bestowed wholly upon himself, that he has really obtained the Monarch's permission to make you his bride; judge then whether he will not have recourse to any measures which can make you his, rather than become the object of the King's vengeance, who would assuredly not fail to punish his temerity

and

and falsehood, should you not become his wife. But as you have assented to my proposals, you can have nothing now to dread. I shall immediately take the necessary steps to procure the bond—Villette is my friend and agent in this business—he will advance me the money, and take your security for the repayment when you come of age."

"Villette! Villette!" said Adelaide,—"and are you not afraid to trust such a man?"

"Oh, no," replied Madame, "the ugly little wretch has taken it into his head to fall most desperately in love with me, and as he is immensely rich, I shall favour him with my hand, as he will instantly dispose of that hideous gawky mistress who bears his name. Your escape is certain, for it will be managed by Villette, whom love has made a traitor to the Marquis. And assuredly I long to fly from this horrid den of mystery and terror—my senses are almost lost by remaining here so long.—I cannot think what St. Viviers can have done

to

to that old woman whom he lately buried, for all this confusion is attributed to her troubled spirit.—I have not, however, seen any thing yet, but I have heard enough to make me wish myself a thousand leagues from the execrable place; and, to confess the truth, you owe no small gratitude to this spirit, as I own it has had no little influence in driving me from hence. But the morning is wearing away quickly, and I can no longer remain here without suspicion—I must, therefore, bid you adieu, Mademoiselle—in the evening I shall visit you again, to fix the time of our signing and departure.—Adieu! be silent."

Madame de Beauvais now retired, leaving Adelaide in a state of the most painful surprise and perplexity.

Although rejoiced by the prospect of speedy escape, for Adelaide doubted not but that Madame and her old lover would equally aid in the deliverance of the Count St. Croix, when they should be informed of his situation, still the lovely maid experienced

rienced the most distressing anxiety; and some doubts of the people with whom she was entering into so serious engagements, and in whom she was on the point of placing the utmost confidence, occasionally rose in her mind, and created the most urgent desire of seeing Father Bertrand, and consulting with him—with what delight then did she hear in about an hour afterwards, that the father was waiting in the antichamber, and desired to see her. She could scarcely believe it possible; and having risen from her couch, and finished the arrangement of her dress, with so much eagerness and hurry, as betrayed to Marcella that she had some deep interest in hastening her interview with the friar, Marcella's curiosity was excited, and feeling vexed at her lady's want of confidence in her, she resolved to learn by listening, what she could not hope to be confidentially informed of. No sooner, therefore, had Adelaide entered the anti-room, where the friar waited, and had closely shut the

door leading into the interior rooms, than Marcella knelt down, and as neither the father nor her lady spoke very low, she at length gleaned enough to gratify the blamable spirit of curiosity which now filled her heart.

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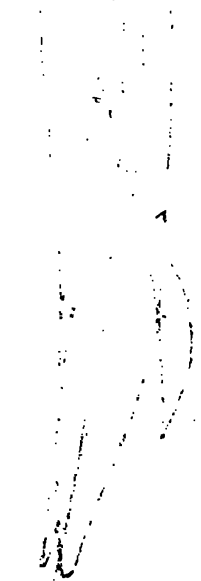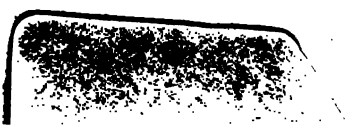
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